

The Coalition by Hauptbahnhof

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Summary: PLEASE READ MY PREVIOUS STORIES BEFORE THIS ONE. THANKS Takes place starting in 2016. Eleven starts her job as director of The Coalition and everything seems to be going well until old forces and enemies come into play. What's happening with Dustin and Amy's daughter? Where is Will? Find out in this story.

1. Chapter 1: The Director

A/N: This is yet another sequel to my previous stories (The Unknown, A Not-So-Normal Life, and The Legion). Go ahead and read those first or else this one won't make too much sense. The next couple of months of my life are going to be chaotic, but I'm going to try and get one chapter posted per week (most likely on Saturdays).

This story is going to be a little different than my others, but it should still be pretty good. It will be *The Bridge to Neverland* to my *Peter and the Starcatchers* (if you understand that reference, please PM me so we can become friends).

Happy reading!

The middle of Chicago was filled with tall buildings. Most of them were unremarkable facades that just served to house a bunch of companies with some stores around the bottom. At first glance, the building on the corner of State Street and Randolph seemed the same as every other. The floors above the shops at ground level were filled with a couple of law offices, two tax firms, a paper company and a dance school. The only floors that were at all interesting were the top two. According to the directory in the lobby, they were owned by a company called Multi-National Holdings Incorporated, but that company only existed on paper. Since 2014, those top two floors had been the headquarters of The Coalition.

Normally, the agents of The Coalition would be frantically working to stop the world from falling apart due to all the threats that existed out of sight of the public. But one evening in August 2016, most of the craziness was put on hold to celebrate the retirement of their esteemed leader. Edward Matthews had first been in charge of the Coalition base in Indianapolis, then San Francisco, then at the beginning of the 2000s he made it to New York where he was promoted to Director of The Coalition. Two years after the headquarters moved to Chicago, he decided it was time for himself to step down and make way for new leadership.

About fifteen minutes into the party, everyone filed in between the

desks to make a semicircle so they could hear Director Matthews speak.

"Thank you everyone," he said, starting off pretty routinely. "I could spend this speech listing all of the things we got done in the fourteen years that I've been Director, but I don't want to take too long. There are only a couple of things I really want to say." The small crowd shuffled around to get a good view of Matthews as he made his remarks. "First, I'd like to thank all of the agents that have worked tirelessly and given up so much to help our cause." There was a moment of silence. "Secondly and lastly, I'd like to officially introduce my replacement. She might be the one person in the world who is actually overqualified for this job." There was a small laugh from the crowd. "The next Director of the Coalition is; Elle Wheeler." There was a small round of applause (the loudest applause coming from Eleven's husband off to the side) as Eleven broke off from the crowd and walked up to meet Matthew. She shook his hand and Matthews stepped back to give his successor the floor.

"I'd like to start by thanking Director Matthews. Not too many people know that he was the one that got me into The Coalition in the first place." She smiled and nodded over to Matthews, then looked back to the crowd. "Well, you all know most of my story already. In fact, I'm pretty sure it's used as a case study in the Coalition Academy nowadays." The crowd laughed quietly. It was true. Eleven's entire story was used during the training of new Coalition agents. "That's just about all I have to say. Enjoy the party, everyone!" The crowd cheered and Eleven walked back over to her husband.

"You did great," Mike said when she got back over to him.

"Really? I thought that was all too short."

"It wasn't. They already know who you are so you didn't actually have to introduce yourself. It was short and simple." Eleven smiled and gave Mike a peck on the lips. They started milling around with the crowd.

It was only a couple more minutes before the elevator dinged. Anywhere else, that would be unremarkable, but due to all the security measures put in place around the Coalition headquarters, it

drew the attention of everyone in the room. The door opened to reveal a gray-haired man. He certainly looked different but he was still easily recognizable.

"Carter!" Eleven called, walking to the elevator to give her friend a hug. Mike followed close behind and gave Carter a handshake once Eleven finally let go of him. While they had moved away from Hawkins after finishing high school, Carter stayed with his wife and kids. They saw him at least once a year when they went down to Hawkins to visit people. He went up to Chicago just about as often as they went to Hawkins, but that was mostly because his three kids lived there too.

"I believe congratulations are in order," Carter said.

"They certainly are," Mike said.

"It's not really *that* big," Eleven said.

"Yes it is," Carter insisted. "You're the first woman to run The Coalition. The most far reaching intelligence organization in the world. I know how modest you are but this is really something you should be proud of." Eleven blushed a little and just smiled before changing the subject.

"How's Elizabeth?" she asked, referring to Carter's wife, her former English teacher.

"She's good. She had to stay back in Hawkins this time. There's a lot to prepare before next week. I have to head out tomorrow morning because of that."

"You two are still teaching?" Mike asked. "I mean... you're older than Matthews. You could retire if you wanted to."

"Yeah, but I don't. I simply enjoy teaching."

"Mike does too," Eleven said. Mike had worked for The Coalition in the past too. They had both been offered positions by Matthews in the mid-nineties and they almost immediately started working as field agents. After their first child was born in 2003, Mike left field duty and took a desk job. Once their second child came a couple

years later, Mike left The Coalition all together and got a job as a high school chemistry teacher. Eleven left her job as a field agent at that point but instead of leaving The Coalition, she got promoted.

"How are the kids?" asked Carter.

"Joyce is starting high school next week and James is starting middle school," Mike said. "Somehow we planned it so that they both have to deal with new schools at the same time."

"Tell me, how much do you kids actually know about all of... this? I mean, The Coalition and everything."

"They really know nothing," Eleven started. "They think I just work for "Multi-National Holdings Incorporated"..." she put air quotes around the name of the company, "...and they don't know anything about... me. Well they don't know anything about my... you know." Eleven was referring to her super powers that caused her to be stuck in the Hawkins National Laboratory for the first decade of her life. "I just want them to have a life away from all of this. Everyone thinks that normal is boring, but really, it's just taken for granted all the time. I want them to have just the normal life that I never did."

Their small talk continued on for the next couple of hours. In that time, a couple of people from around the office came up to congratulate Eleven. She would officially start her job the next day. Carter left at about 7:00 to get some sleep before his drive back to Hawkins and the party slowly wound down after that.

After they got home, Mike and Eleven pretty much just said goodnight to their two children and went off to bed. Eleven had a big day ahead of her in the morning and Mike didn't mind going to bed early. Mike took a quick shower and came out to see Eleven sitting on the bed with her back to him.

"You ready to go to bed?" he asked. Eleven sniffled.

"Yeah," she said. Something was wrong in her voice.

"Is everything OK?" There was a long silence.

"It's been another year. I just realized it. As of today, it's been another year." Mike sat down on the bed next to Eleven and rested his hand on her shoulder.

"It's not too late. They'll find him.

"Who? Who's going to find him. It's been fifteen years. Everyone stopped looking... I just can't help but think that he's back in the Upside-Down."

"How would he get there? The monster is gone and the gate closed up. There's no way." Eleven sniffled again. Eleven turned her head to look at Mike. "Will Byers is perfectly fine," Mike said insistently.

"I know," Eleven said even though she wasn't sure. They sat in silence for another minute.

"Ready to go to bed?" Mike asked.

"Yes."

Alice Henderson stood at the edge of Lake Michigan, almost hypnotized by how the moonlight glanced off the water. It was the first time she had run away from home and she didn't really know what to do. She was about to start her last year of high school and her parents had gotten really angry at her for forgetting about all her summer homework.

"It's your last year. I can't believe you're dropping the ball now," her dad had said. Her mother hadn't really said anything, but she did just stand by and agree. They simply didn't understand. They didn't think about how that summer was her last chance to spend time with her friends.

"There's always next summer," her mother had said. While that was true, Alice knew she would have to be working all summer if she had any hope of paying tuition for one of the colleges her parents liked. Alice just needed to get away. She just needed a break. So she climbed out her window and went for a walk. Half an hour later, she found herself on the shores of the lake.

She didn't have anywhere else to go, so she just sat down in the sand and started thinking out loud;

"I'll get the work done. Why won't they just leave me be?" Alice asked herself. "They can be so annoying some times." The ground shook subtly, almost as if an earthquake was rolling in but much smaller.

"I can help you," said a deep and powerful voice. Alice quickly stood up and started looking for the source. After about a minute, she wasn't entirely convinced that she had heard a voice at all.

"Hello?" she called out, just to make sure.

"I can help you," came the voice again. Alice still didn't see anyone but could tell that the voice was coming from the direction of the lake.

"Who are you?" she asked, her voice faltering as fear grew inside her.

"It doesn't matter who I am. All that matters is that I can help you." The fear became too much. Alice turned and started to run back to the street but slipped on the sand. "You're angry at your parents. I can help," the voice said. Something changed in Alice in this moment. She didn't know why, but she suddenly felt a small amount of trust in the person who she couldn't see. She stopped running.

"You can get my parents off my back?" she asked.

"I can do so much more than that. Would you like to see?" Every part of Alice's brain was telling her to run away and forget about the disembodied voice in the water, but she chose to ignore that.

"Show me."

A/N: Please, please leave a review to let me know what you think. Reader reviews have played a major part in the outcome of my previous stories and this one is no different. Thanks for reading!

2. Chapter 2: The Old Woman

A/N: I am out of town and away from my computer this week. But if all went well, this chapter should nonetheless be posted on time. Again, let me know what you think and thanks for reading!

Eleven woke up in the middle of the night with a start. Her heart was beating fast, her breathing was ragged. A glance over at her alarm clock showed that it was only 11:43PM. Not even midnight yet. Mike slowly woke up next to her.

"Everything OK?" he asked groggily without opening his eyes.

"Yes... Maybe," Eleven said. Mike sat up and turned on the lamp next to him.

"What happened?"

"I don't know exactly. I... felt something."

"Like what?"

"I don't know. Something... old."

"Old how?"

"Old like... something I haven't felt in a while. Something almost... Upside-Down." This was upsetting. Eleven hadn't felt anything related to the Upside-Down since they were fourteen. It had been over thirty years.

"Are you sure that's what it was? Are you sure it isn't something else? I mean, you have a big day tomorrow. It's only natural that you would be stressed." They paused. Eleven just stared into the dark for a few long moments.

"I'm just going to try and get back to sleep. Whatever it was, it's gone now." Mike nodded. They both needed their rest.

Eleven was up before dawn broke. She took a quick shower and went downstairs to make herself some breakfast when she found Mike already there with a plate of waffles.

"How did you make those so quickly?" she asked.

"I made the batter yesterday so I just had to stick them in the waffle iron while you were in the shower." Eleven smiled. Out of all the people in the world, she knew that she must be the luckiest to have Mike.

A little talking and a lot of waffles followed before Eleven had to leave for work. She said goodbye to Mike and went out to the garage. Mike and Eleven had a new house, new phones, new computers and so on, but Eleven's car was relatively old. It was actually the very first car she had ever bought. After she finished high school, she bought Carter's BMW for a price that she was sure was way less than it was actually worth.

Despite the almost unreasonably early hour, there were still a lot of people on the highway. There weren't enough to cause a bunch of traffic, but still enough to be a little annoying. It didn't take too long before Eleven pulled into the parking garage under her office building. She got in the elevator and patiently waited until it got to the top floor. The bell dinged and Eleven took in a deep breath before the doors opened.

The Coalition's headquarters never really stopped for the night. Things had certainly slowed down since the previous day, but they had never completely stopped. People were at their desks doing analysis work, some agents were urgently running around and everything in between was there. Eleven stepped out and started walking over to her office.

"Good morning, Director," said one of the analysts as she walked by.

"Good morning," Eleven said back. She took a moment to be proud before finishing the short journey to her corner office

Once inside, Eleven took a moment to just appreciate the position she was taking. Then, she went over and sat down in her new chair.

There was already a file on her desk, the morning's briefing. After about half an hour, one of the higher ranking agents knocked on the door and said;

"We're ready when you are, Director."

"I'm ready. Come on in," Eleven said. The morning briefing was something that Eleven had taken part in for the past couple of years. The highest ranking agents in the office all gathered in with the Director to go over the new things in the files they all got.

Four agents walked in and settled in various parts around the room. One stayed standing near the windows, two sat down in the seats on the other side of Eleven's desk and the other one decided to lean up against the door.

"Go ahead and start us off, Agent Read," Eleven said to one of the agents sitting on the other side of the desk. He started to read out the main points from the briefing;

"CISMIL in Portugal is asking for everything we collected on those strange magnetic fields from west of Europe about a month ago. We don't think there's a security risk in that but we need your approval before we can do anything."

"They can have it," Eleven said. "I don't see any harm in giving it to them but I also don't think they'll be able to make too much of it since we haven't been able to."

"OK," Agent Read continued. "Oh... Here's a big one. It looks like an old vigilante might be active again."

"What's so special about that one?" asked the agent leaning up against the door.

"It's the only vigilante that's managed to completely evade The Coalition. He started up sometime around 1995 and then just dropped off the radar sometime around 2002. In that time, the only things we were able to find out about him was that he was a male and that, at one point, he had medium-length black hair. We think he popped back up two days ago in Tokyo."

"What makes you think this is the same guy?" Eleven asked.

"His style mainly. Nobody, not even us, is able to figure out how he gets in and out and he only ever goes after people that are already under serious investigation."

"Serious investigation by who?"

"By us."

"So whoever this is probably just has access to Coalition information." Eleven paused to think about what they should do. "Let's broaden our search for this guy by assuming that whoever did this twenty years ago and whoever this is now are different people. Even though it makes sense that they would be the same person, it could very well be a copycat. That being said, start looking into people with access to the Coalition servers with special focus on people that were here back in 1995 and are still here today." The rest of the agents nodded in agreement.

"I think that's everything that's important today, Director," Agent Read said. "Every other point has already been delegated to the appropriate departments." Eleven stood up.

"OK then. Back to work." The other agents began to leave. "Agent Read!" Eleven called out just before he left. "Can you actually stay behind for a moment?" The others left and Read closed the door.

"What is it?"

"I was wondering if you could have an analyst look through all the results from the monitoring equipment we have around the Chicago area from last night." Read furrowed his brow. He thought this was kind of a strange request.

"That's ridiculous amounts of data. Especially for one analyst. That's even more if he doesn't know what he's looking for."

"Have him look for the inter-dimensional signature detailed in my old file."

"Your old file from thirty years ago? You think that's back?"

"I don't know. I just... felt something and want to make sure it's nothing." Read nodded.

"Of course, Director."

A couple of hours after Eleven left, Joyce and James, Mike and Eleven's children, woke up. James was the first one to come downstairs. He was already finished with his breakfast before Joyce finally showed up.

"Good morning," Mike said when she did finally get down there.

"Hi, dad," Joyce said, opening the pantry to find some cereal.

"What do you two have planned for today?"

"I'm going out with Barb," Joyce said. Barbara Harrington was Joyce's cousin and best friend. They were the same age and had done pretty much everything together for as long as they could remember.

"I have no plans today," announced James.

"I'm going to have lunch with Dustin and Amy," Mike said. "Do you think you'll be OK home alone?"

"I'm eleven, Dad. I'll be fine."

Dustin and Amy Henderson had gotten engaged pretty much as soon as they finished college. The wedding followed shortly after. They moved up to the Chicago area after about a year and quickly found some nice jobs. About twenty years later, they had three kids and a nice life. They kept up relationships with most of their high school friends. Amy had pointed out once that it seemed a little strange that they had all moved away from Hawkins, but stayed pretty close together. Everyone eventually decided that it made sense that they all stuck together. They were, after all, the only ones that understood the most traumatic experiences in each others lives.

On that particular day, Dustin had left for work early but Amy had the morning off. She spent the entire morning thinking about the

argument she and Dustin had had with their oldest daughter the previous night.

"Maybe we were to hard on her," thought Amy. "I hope she's OK." She went upstairs and knocked on her daughter's door to check and see that she was OK.

"Alice?" she called after knocking. "I just wanted to check that you're OK."

"Come in," came Alice's voice from the other side of the door. Amy slowly pushed open the door and walked in to see Alice calmly working at her desk.

"You're working on those assignments!" Amy remarked.

"Yeah. I thought about what you said last night and... you're right. This is important." Amy was honestly more surprised than anything. Even though Alice was usually a good student, the fight the previous night had gotten heated and she had expected Alice to still be a little bitter.

"I'm just glad we're on the same page. I'll let you work." Amy smiled and started walking out.

"Thanks, mom!" Alice said with a smile. As soon as Amy closed the door, Alice's smile turned from sweet to sinister. "She doesn't suspect a thing," she whispered.

Joyce and Barbara met right after lunch. They didn't have any specific plans for that day, so they spent a couple of hours in Barb's basement before deciding that they were bored.

"What do you want to do?" asked Barb.

"We could bike over to the library and get a DVD," Joyce suggested.

"We can already get everything on the internet and that would eventually lead to more of us just sitting around in the basement."

"You wanna go get something to eat?"

"I don't want to spend any money."

"Do you have any ideas?" Barb thought for a moment.

"Why don't we go to the lake? We haven't been there in months." Lake Michigan had some nice public beaches around Chicago. Joyce wasn't too enthusiastic about that idea, but she didn't have anything better in mind.

"Fine."

Joyce borrowed a swimsuit from Barb, they got changed then went out to bike over to the beach.

"Excited for school next week?" Barb asked sarcastically while they were on their way to the beach.

"It's not the worst thing that could happen."

"Do you have any classes you're excited about?"

"Most of them, I guess. It's just that... I have chemistry class with my dad."

"I thought you were always on good terms with your dad."

"I am it's just... strange. He has to give me grades and such."

"OK. That is pretty awkward. I know it's not as bad as yours, but I have English with Sarah." Sarah Leasy was one of Mike and Eleven's friends from high school who followed in her adoptive parents' footsteps and became a teacher. She had moved up to Chicago after college to be with her friends. Joyce and Barb had known Sarah for practically their entire lives.

Joyce began to feel a little light-headed. She thought it was just because of the bike riding, but it quickly got worse and she started to falter. She swerved across the sidewalk and narrowly missed hitting Barb. Joyce managed to catch herself just before driving off the pavement altogether.

"Are you OK?" asked Barb.

"I'll be fine. The lake isn't much farther."

"Nope. We're almost there." A minute later, they could see the small path that led down from a small parking lot to the beach. As soon as it came into sight, Joyce started to get a bad headache. Another couple seconds and it became unbearable. Everything went white for a moment and Joyce couldn't hear anything. The next thing she knew, she was on the ground and Barb was standing over her.

"Oh my god! Are you OK? Should I call an ambulance." Joyce slowly sat up and shook her head.

"What happened?"

"You swerved again and fell off your bike. I stopped and you were just laying there and I couldn't get a response out of you for a couple of seconds. Are you sure you don't want me to call an ambulance?"

"No, I'll be fine. Let's just go home."

Out in the Chicago suburbs, pretty far west from Eleven and Mike's house, there was a nursing home complex. It seemed pretty normal, and for the most part it was. But there was one big reason that Eleven put aside time in her busy schedule to visit it at least once every two weeks. After her first day as Director, Eleven braved the afternoon rush hour traffic (which was especially annoying with the manual transmission that the BMW had) and drove out to the nursing home.

She found a spot in the not-so-crowded parking lot and made her way up to the room on the third floor that served as the home for the woman who had at one point been one of the most dangerous criminals, even though nobody had ever heard of her. Eleven knocked lightly on the door and about fifteen seconds later, the door slowly opened to let her in.

"Hello, El. How are you?" asked the old woman on the other side of the door. Eleven walked in and gave her a hug.

"I'm good, Mallory. How are you?"

"I've certainly been better." Mallory Brenner was the sister of the man

who had held Eleven in the Hawkins lab at the beginning of her life. She and Eleven didn't start out on good terms. But after she betrayed everything she had worked for in favor of helping Eleven and The Coalition, things got a little better between them. It took a while for them to get to the relationship they did, but they got there.

They spent some time making tea and getting cookies ready before sitting down in the small living room to talk.

"Has anything interesting happened recently?" Mallory asked after sitting down in her big, comfortable armchair.

"I got promoted to Director. Today was my first day." There were very people in the world with whom Eleven could talk about her work at The Coalition, but Mallory was one of them.

"That's great. I always knew you would do something great. Admittedly, thirty years ago, I thought that 'something great' would be very different." Eleven didn't like to talk to Mallory about her crimes, so she was surprised when Mallory was so open about it.

"I thought you wouldn't want to talk about... you know... that."

"All the crimes I committed? I don't want to talk about them but I think it's important that I do. Of course I'm ashamed about them, but that doesn't mean I should pretend they never happened."

"You're a much different person now."

"I'm certainly a much older person," Mallory remarked, taking a sip of tea. "Which reminds me. I don't know how much more time I have left and there's some things I want to know."

"Don't talk like that."

"Why not? It's true and if I wait much longer, I'm going to die with even more regrets than I already have." Eleven gave Mallory a chance to speak. "You're a busy woman with a stressful job, you have two kids. Why do you take the time to come and visit a woman twice your age who once, quite literally, had a gun to your head?"

"It's like I said. You're a different person."

"Maybe, but you would never have know that if you hadn't come to see me for the first time. I always thought you just felt sorry for me."

"Why did you ask if you already had an answer in your mind?" Mallory didn't answer. "OK. Yes. Maybe that was why I visited you the first time. But it's not like that anymore."

"What is it then?"

"I... admire you."

"Really? You admire the woman that released a murderous monster by manipulating you and your brother." Eleven looked away for a moment once Will was mentioned. She tried not to think too much about it.

"You took a hard look at your life and decided against everything you thought you knew in favor of doing what you thought was right. Almost nobody is willing to do that. That took courage." Mallory laughed slightly.

"And all these years I thought it was just because of my chocolate chip cookies." Eleven smiled and laughed too.

"Well... that too." Eleven's laughter died down a little bit when she remembered what she really wanted to ask. "Just one more thing. The Upside-Down... you studied it, right?"

"Yes, why?" Mallory was beginning to get nervous.

"What if I... felt it? What would that mean?" Mallory took a deep breath.

"I studied how to get there and back. If you need anything more than that, you're going to have to do something you don't want to do."

"What?"

"You're going to have to talk to the only people who studied the feel of the thing; Nine and Ten."

3. Chapter 3: The Visitor

The beginning of the school year was always a stressful time. That was made doubly so in the Wheeler household since both of their children were starting off the new school year at new schools. Mike naturally had to leave early to set up before class. Eleven was able to get the morning off of work to help the kids.

As much as she would have loved to make the kids a nice breakfast, the rushed nature of a school morning combined with all the work that Eleven had to prepare for that afternoon meant that Joyce and James were stuck just eating toast.

"Are you both sure you have everything?" Eleven asked while packing her own bag for work.

"Yes, mom," both Joyce and James said in unison.

"You have books, pencils, notebooks-"

"Seriously, mom. We're fine," Joyce interrupted. She gave her mom a reassuring smile. Eleven took a deep breath.

"OK. Time to go."

The high school was close enough that Joyce could ride her bike there most of the year, and she could walk when it got too cold. The middle school however, was a little farther away so James had to ride the school bus. But on the first day, Eleven offered to drive him. There was a lot of traffic just outside the school made up of parents that had the same idea.

"Excited?" asked Eleven while sitting at a stop light just outside of the school driveway.

"Yep. A little nervous."

"Don't be. I know you're going to do great. At least you have an advantage over me when I started middle school."

"How so?"

"You kind of know how this works already. I had no idea."

"Oh yeah, middle school is when you stopped being home schooled." Eleven didn't like lying to her kids but that wasn't entirely a lie. She had been home schooled for the better part of a year before being allowed into school with everyone else. But she never did tell them that she had grown up in a lab, instead lying that she grew up in a foster home before being adopted by the Byers.

It was only about another minute before they were at the entrance to the school.

"Bye, mom," James said. He leaned over and gave his mother a hug before running out of the car. After the door shut, Eleven watched her son walk into the school before putting the car in gear and driving off to work.

Joyce walked into school and immediately saw Barb.

"Exciting, isn't it?" Barb asked.

"Why? It's pretty much the same thing as middle school but in a different building. I mean, I'm not really complaining, but I just don't find it all that exciting."

"Why do I hang out with a buzzkill so much?"

"You've known me my entire life. I'm honestly surprised you're only realizing this now." Both girls laughed.

"Hey!" said a voice from behind them. "You two are finally in high school, huh?" Joyce and Barb spun around to see Alice Henderson standing behind them. They both called her their cousin even though they weren't technically related. Their parents spent so much time with each other that they really seemed like cousins.

"Hi, Alice!" Joyce said. "Yeah. Finally in high school. Anything we should know."

"Let me think." Alice looked up at the ceiling a little while she mentally flipped through the previous three years at the school.

"Pretty much all you need to know is that your dad is a good chemistry teacher, never eat cafeteria mashed potatoes and never take Latin."

"I signed up for Latin," Barb confessed. "Why shouldn't you take?"

"Well, it's fine as a blow-off class. But if you want to actually learn anything, that won't happen with Mr. Felix. If you actually learn anything, switch to something else as fast as you can."

"Is it really that bad?"

"One of my friends was taking it sophomore year. Apparently they took one test all year and he didn't turn off his projector while writing the test. A lot of people like getting the language credit without having to do any work, but you don't seem like that kind of person."

"No, that's not me." The bell rang, signaling that there were only five minutes left until class started.

"Sorry, but I have to get to class," Alice said. She quickly gave Barb a hug, then Joyce. Joyce could have sworn that Alice shuddered a little during their hug. "Bye," Alice said once more while leaving to go to class.

Eleven started the morning briefing as soon as she got into work and had a chance to read over the file that she found neatly placed on her desk.

"I think the only big point we have to talk about is that our vigilante struck again last night. There was a break in at a Swiss data center that matches his style exactly. One of the server managers was secretly under investigation from us. That manager disappeared last night along with a hard drive from one of the servers and whoever broke in." The others nodded quietly. "If nobody has anything else to say, I think that's the end of the meeting for today." The rest of the agents stood up and left the room except for Agent Read.

"The results came in from the analysis you requested last week," he

said.

"And?" asked Eleven. Read handed her a file. Eleven opened it and started flipping through.

"We didn't find anything conclusive. Some things looked a little strange, but again, nobody is confident enough to draw any conclusions from it." Eleven stared intensely at the readings in the file. "We can run some further investigations if you want."

"No. It's fine. Nothing's come up in the last week and I don't want to waste anyone's time." Read nodded and left the room. Eleven slowly sat down at her desk and got ready to start on her other work. But as much as she tried, she couldn't shake the feeling that something was wrong.

Alice was able to slip away from her friends during the lunch period. She searched for a while until she found a completely empty room that was unlocked. One of the computer labs was open so she walked into it, closed the door behind her, and sat down in the corner where nobody would see her.

"We have a problem," she said to the empty room. "There's another one." The voice from that night on the lake returned, but this time it wasn't coming from the lake. It was inside Alice's mind.

"I've noticed," it said. Even in Alice's head, its deep tone resonated with power. "This one is weak. It shouldn't be a problem."

"I know, it's just..." Alice's voice trailed off.

"What is it? Please, speak your mind."

"I think it would be best if we took care of this. Let me use what you've given me. Let me prove myself." The voice was silent in deliberation for a moment.

"Very well," it conceded. "But make sure you don't get noticed. At least not for now."

"I will not disappoint you."

It was almost 8PM before Eleven got home. The sun had already set and the sky was just a dark blue.

"I'm back!" she announced as she opened the door. "How was school for everyone?" James came running up and gave Eleven a hug.

"It was good and you were right."

"About what?"

"It wasn't hard. It was actually kind of fun."

"I'm glad to hear it." Eleven walked a little further into the living room to see Joyce sprawled out on the couch, reading something on her phone. "Don't you have homework?"

"It was the first day," Joyce said. "The teachers aren't *that* mean."

"You don't even have homework from your dad?"

"No. But he did say that no homework was 'a treat for the first day'." Eleven laughed a little. She recognized that line as one that Carter would use when she was a kid.

"How was it, having your dad as a teacher?"

"Kind of awkward, but otherwise fine." Mike walked into the room right at that moment.

"And how was it having your daughter as a student?" asked Eleven.

"I tried to make it the least awkward that I could. Apparently I only did OK."

"How was work, Mom?" James asked.

"Work was... good," Eleven said. Of course, she couldn't really describe her work day to her kids, but she could go into a little more depth with Mike later.

In the middle of the night, Eleven took in a sharp gasp of air and sat straight up in bed. Mike woke up too.

"What happened?" he asked, then looked at the clock. "It's 1AM." Eleven took a couple deep breaths but couldn't get them to be too smooth.

"It happened again. Whatever I felt a week ago, it happened again."

"Didn't you say The Coalition didn't find anything about that?"

"Yes, but I know what I felt." Eleven turned to sit on the edge of the bed and began putting on her slippers.

"Where are you going?" asked Mike. He too, at this point, sat up and turned on the lamp.

"I can't get back to sleep right now. I'm just going to go get a snack or... something."

"I'll come with."

"No, don't. You have to teach tomorrow."

"And you have to run a major intelligence agency tomorrow. I think it will be fine if I go downstairs with you to eat some snacks while you."

They both walked downstairs and got some snacks. They sat in silence and didn't notice the time ticking away until an hour had passed.

"How are you feeling now?" asked Mike.

"A little better, but I still can't get it out of my head." There was another silence. This one much shorter than the preceding one.

"Do you want to go back to bed?" Eleven thought for a moment.

"Yes." They packed away all the food they had gotten out, then started walking back. But as soon as Eleven's foot hit the first stair, the doorbell rang. Both Mike and Eleven looked at each other in

confusion.

"It's 2AM," Mike said, voicing the question they both had. "Who is that?" The doorbell rang again. Mike and Eleven walked over to the door and Eleven put her hand on the knob. She hesitated for a moment, then opened the door. Standing on the other side was Timothy Carter, formerly known as Twelve. He didn't say 'hi', or apologize for showing up at such a strange hour, all he said was;

"Did you feel that too?"

"Upside-Down?" Eleven asked.

"Yeah," Tim said. "I felt something about a week ago, but I thought it might just have been a nightmare. But then it happened again."

"Same with me."

"What does this mean?" asked Mike.

"It means... I have to do something I don't want to."

A/N: Let me know what you think of this posting schedule and where the story is going so far. Thanks for reading! Please leave a review.

4. Chapter 4: The Island

A/N: I have decided to start posting two times a week (Wednesday and Saturday) even though I know that means that posts will become irregular when my life gets turned upside down from the end of June through the beginning of August. I hope everyone enjoys the story, please leave a review. Even a short one is always nice to get.

"Remind me again, why do you *both* have to go on mom's work trip?" Joyce asked. Eleven had quickly arranged her trip out to talk to Nine and Ten, so she was ready to go that weekend. Mike had offered to come along and Eleven appreciated the support.

"Her company had an extra ticket and we thought it would be nice to spend some time together," Mike explained.

"But isn't mom going to be working the whole time?"

"During the day, yes. But I'll have the evenings free," Eleven said. The car was all loaded up with their luggage and they were driving Joyce and James over to Dustin and Amy's house where they would spend the weekend.

"Are you not excited to spend the weekend with the Hendersons?" Mike asked.

"I am, I'm just trying to understand this." Mike turned around from the passenger seat to look at the kids. Joyce was looking up towards the front of the car while James was completely zoned-out, just playing a game on his phone.

Dustin and Amy only lived about five minutes away. The Wheelers were greeted as soon as they pulled up. There was a flurry of activity for a couple of minutes as the kids' overnight bags were unloaded from the car and the kids started talking with their cousins. Only about two minutes later, the kids, as well as Mike and Dustin, had gone into the house, leaving just Amy and Eleven outside.

"I heard what you're doing," Amy said. "Are you sure you're going to

be OK?"

"I'm going to talk to two people who are powerless and locked up in one of the most secure places on the planet. I think I'll be fine."

"Yeah, physically, but I mean... that's got to be hard."

"I know." Eleven sighed. "I'm certainly not looking forward to this, but it's something I have to do."

"Why? What happened that you have to do this?"

"I don't want to get you scared. I'll tell you when I have a little more information."

"It's a little late for that, I'm already scared." Eleven opened her mouth to reply, but then Mike came out of the house.

"We have to go," he said. "We don't want to miss the flight."

"OK. I'm ready." Eleven turned back to Amy. "Try not to worry. Even if there is something, I think we caught it early. You don't have anything to be scared of."

"Are you absolutely sure we are safe?" Amy asked Eleven while she climbed back into her car.

"Yes," Eleven assured her friend. That was a lie, but it was one that Eleven herself wanted to believe.

Mike and Eleven's first flight was to Honolulu. It took over nine hours but because of time zones, it was only about 3PM by the time they got there. But a combination of the long flight and the fact that as far as Mike and Eleven were concerned, it was a little after 8PM, they were completely burned out by the time they checked into their hotel. One restless night later, they woke up for their next flight.

They took a taxi back to the airport and were met on the tarmac by a small jet.

"We get a private jet?" Mike asked.

"How else are we going to reach a remote island prison?" Eleven pointed out. The jet didn't quite meet Mike's expectations. It was owned by the military so it wasn't quite as luxurious as he had hoped. Despite that, it was comfortable enough for their one hour flight to the most secure prison Earth. They didn't talk too much underway. It was obvious that Eleven was anxious.

The island with the prison really didn't look like much. There was just a landing strip and a small concrete structure. The plane pulled in and landed smoothly. They slowly taxied over to the entrance of the concrete structure and when the pilot said it was OK, they opened the door.

"Director Wheeler! Good to see you," said a man that came outside to meet up with the plane. He shook hands with Eleven. "My name is Agent Brooks. I'm in charge here."

"Nice to meet you, Agent Brooks. I really wish we could have met under better circumstances," Eleven said. Brooks shook Mike's hand, then led the two into the concrete building.

"This looks a little small to be a prison," Mike said.

"This building is just the security checkpoint," Brooks explained. "The actual prison is underground." Mike and Eleven checked in with a guard. They were something of celebrities within The Coalition, so it didn't take too long to confirm their identities and get them through the checks. They got into an elevator and started the slow decent down to the cell block.

"I didn't see any other kind of vehicles on the surface," Mike said. "How do you guys get home?"

"A plane comes once a week to change guards and bring supplies," Brooks said. "The rest of the time, there's no possible way off of the island. It makes the possibility of prisoner escape practically zero."

"But what about you guys? What if there's an emergency?"

"If we absolutely need to get off the island, we'll just jump in the ocean and wait to get rescued. The nearest Coalition base is only

fifteen minutes away."

The elevator reached the bottom of the shaft and the doors slowly creaked open.

"Both of them are in separate interrogation rooms at the moment," Brooks said. "Who do you want to start with?"

"I'll talk to Nine," Eleven decided. "I'm going to try and avoid talking to Ten if I can." Even though Eleven considered both of the twins among the worst people in the world, she reserved a special feeling of hate for the psychopathic Ten.

A couple of buzzing security doors later, Eleven entered the interrogation room with Nine. She hadn't seen him in over thirty years and almost didn't recognize him at first. Mainly because he had a beard that was turning slightly gray. Eleven glanced over at the one-way mirror on one wall of the room. Even though she couldn't actually see through it, she knew Mike was on the other side. A combination of knowing Mike was there and seeing the black collar around Nine's neck that inhibited his powers gave Eleven the confidence she needed to walk over and sit down in the chair on the opposite side of the table.

"It's been a while," Ten said.

"I'm not here for small talk," Eleven said back as calmly as she could. "Tell me anything you know about Upside-Down activity over the last thirty years. Specially over the last couple of weeks." Nine leaned back in his chair and crossed his arms as much as his handcuffs would allow.

"No," he said.

"No? What do you mean 'no'?"

"It looks like we only get one opportunity to screw with you every three decades. So I'm going to be making the most of this."

"You certainly aren't in a position to be negotiating."

"I know. I'm not trying to negotiate. Like I said; I'm just trying to

screw with you."

"So? You're just going to screw with me by wasting my time?"

"I will, yes. That means that if you want to get anything out of this visit, you're going to have to go talk to my sister." Eleven sat for a moment, silently fuming. "As much as I'd like to think we have a special relationship, I know you hate her much more. I assume you're talking to me first to avoid having to see her at all." Eleven didn't say anything. Instead, she simply stood up, waited for the door to buzz again, and walked out.

"So you're going to talk to Ten?" asked Mike on the other side.

"Looks like I have no other option."

Agent Brooks led them down a hallway to another room. Eleven got buzzed in yet again and faced the person she considered her worst enemy on the other side of the door.

"Hi, Eleven!" Ten said, surprisingly enthusiastically once the door opened. "Or should I say; Director Eleven? I heard about the promotion. Congratulations." Eleven slowly sat down, trying everything she could to not explode on Ten.

"Tell me everything you know ab-

"No," Ten interrupted. "I will tell you, but not yet."

"What do you want?" Ten's signature psychopathic smile came onto her face.

"I just want to catch up. It's been a while. You know, now I'm as old as Mallory was the first time you met her."

"How long is this going to take?"

"As long as I want. Just play along and it will all be over soon. So... how've you been? Are you still together with Mikey?"

"Yes. Mike and I are together and married."

"Wow. Good for you. Any little ones?" Eleven was starting to get uncomfortable. She really didn't want Ten to know about her family, but she also didn't see any other way.

"Yes. Two."

"Ooh. And what are their names?" Ten leaned in.

"Joyce and James."

"So... I know where the name Joyce comes from. That's your mom. But why did you name the other one James?" Eleven took another deep breath in.

"James is the long form of Jim. We named him after Chief Hopper."

"I heard about him dying. I have to say though, I wasn't surprised by it. I almost never saw him without a cigarette. If only we knew that those things were bad for your health."

"Can we change the subject?" asked Eleven quickly. Immediately after, she regretted saying that. Ten slowly sat up in her chair and carefully prepared her next attack.

"How's Will? Still missing?"

"How do you know about that?" Eleven asked, anger brewing in her voice.

"I hear things from the guards every once in a while. Plus, I've had thirty years to spend focusing on the Upside-Down."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"When we were young, Mallory taught us to feel any change between the Upside-Down and our world. After a while, we were able to tell when and what was passing between worlds. I noticed that first time Will Byers went missing, and then again."

"You're lying," Eleven accused through gritted teeth. "Every way in and out of the Upside-Down was sealed when we defeated One and the Demogorgon."

"I wouldn't be so sure about the Demogorgon being completely gone. I've been feeling it every once and a while ever since I got locked up here."

"That's impossible. Will said it was gone."

"Well why don't you ask him? Oh wait, you can't." Eleven had never seen Ten smile so much.

"Enough," Eleven declared. "Tell me anything you know about Upside-Down activity over the last thirty years. Specially over the last couple of weeks."

"Fine. So... everything I've already told you and something else starting about two years ago?"

"What do you mean by 'something else'?"

"Do you think there's something I'm not telling you? I'm obviously not responsible for any of this. If there is some kind of threat coming from the Upside-Down, it's also in my interest to get rid of it."

"Can you be any more specific about it?"

"It came from the Upside-Down as opposed to going to it."

"How could something come from the Upside-Down?"

"Do you really think that the Demogorgon was the only living thing there? I don't know what it is, but I will admit that I am scared."

"Is there something different about Alice?" Joyce asked Edward, Amy and Dustin's second oldest kid. He was one year older than Joyce but they had always been good friends. He wasn't as close a friend as Barb was, but their relationship was also just different. As Joyce got older and started new things, Edward, having already experienced most of those things, acted as a sort of mentor. But even when he was helping her out, He never got condescending or anything. They were always equals.

"I didn't notice anything." Edward spun around in his desk chair to

face Joyce standing in the doorway of his room. "Why do you ask?"

"I don't know, she just seems... different."

"Different how?" Joyce walked into the room and sat down on the bed.

"It's like, she's just shutting me out or something. It seems like she just has no interest in talking to me."

"I would chalk that up to her just being a teenager. Now that she's a senior, I bet she thinks she's somehow superior to everyone else."

"Yeah, maybe." Joyce wasn't entirely convinced, but she also didn't really care to explore the topic any further. "What are you working on?" she asked.

"Well, I'm supposed to be doing homework. But I have so little that I figure I can get it all done during lunch tomorrow, so I'm playing video games." Joyce laughed.

"That's quite responsible of you," she pointed out.

"Hey, I get my homework done. I get good grades. Who cares *how* I do it?"

"I would like to think your parents would care."

"They do, but as long as I keep my grades up they're pretty chill. What's it like by you?" Joyce didn't answer, instead she just sat there.

"Joyce?" Edward asked again, beginning to get worried. Joyce slumped off the bed and fell on the ground. Edward sprang up and went over to her. "Joyce?" he called. He shook her shoulders. "Joyce!" he yelled louder. She didn't respond to anything. "Mom!" Edward shouted. Amy ran upstairs as soon as she heard her son calling.

"What is it?" Amy asked.

"Call an ambulance," Edward said, holding the limp and unresponsive Joyce in his arms.

Ten was left sitting in her interrogation room for almost forty five minutes after Eleven left. This meant that Mike and Eleven had fully left the island before Brooks and another agent came to move her back to her cell.

"I know I only have one data point. But if this pattern holds up, apparently Eleven is only going to visit once every thirty years or so," Ten explained as the agents as they put smaller handcuffs on her and took off the ones holding her down to the table. "Now seems a good a time as any," Ten continued, not seeming to get any interest from the agents. "Agent Brooks, how many of us are there?"

"Three," Brooks said.

"What is she talking about?" asked the other agent.

"Three out of...?" Ten asked.

"Five," Brooks finished.

"That sounds good to me," Ten said. "It's time to start."

"What are you talking about?" This time, the other agent asked Ten directly.

"I think it's kind of funny," Ten started saying. "The only place The Coalition didn't look for members of The Legion was within their own organization."

"That's ridiculous. Why do you think-" The other agent stopped mid-sentence. Brooks had pulled out a gun and put a bullet in his head before he was able to finish it. Brooks then took a key off his belt and opened Ten's handcuffs.

"Thank you very much," Ten said. The door buzzed and yet another agent ran in.

"I heard a gunshot! What happened?" That agent never got an answer. He too was shot.

"I assume that's the other Coalition agent and that the rest of us that remain are from The Legion?"

"Yes, mam," Brooks responded very calmly.

"Good. Get my brother. It's time to get things up and running again."

"Yes, mam," Brooks said again. He was about to leave the room when he noticed Ten tugging at the collar that was blocking her powers. "I will warn you that removing that collar in any way will send an alert to The Coalition and that it's also a GPS tracker."

"That's OK. Leave it on for now. I can wait a little bit longer." Ten stopped tugging at the collar and instead just started planning. "Make sure the change of guards coming in three days are all Legion members, and tell any remaining leaders to meet us here."

5. Chapter 5: The Hospital

The ambulance showed up at the Henderson's in only five minutes. They got Joyce on a gurney and loaded her up into the back of the ambulance. Amy rode with her while Dustin stayed behind to watch the kids. To Amy, everything in the ambulance was all happening so fast, but it also seemed to take forever. She just wanted to get to the hospital where actual doctors could take care of Joyce.

"What's wrong with her?" asked Amy while the paramedics were examining Joyce. She had to yell a little in order to be heard over the wailing of the siren.

"We don't know yet," one of the paramedics said while examining Joyce's eyes with a scope. The ambulance made a sharp turn and Amy had to quickly grab on to something to avoid being thrown to the other side of the vehicle. "What was she doing when she fainted?"

"She was with my son. I only came when I heard him calling. He said that she was just sitting there and then it happened. He might have said that she was unresponsive first." Both paramedics looked each other in the eye. Joyce bumped around as the ambulance drove along. "Do you know what's wrong with her?"

"This is a little too much for us," the other paramedic said. "We're mostly good for cuts and bruises. This is more complicated, it's the kind of thing it'll take a doctor to figure out." Right in that moment, Joyce took a sharp breath in and her eyes shot open. Everyone else was shocked and couldn't say anything. That gave Joyce a little time to look around and try to figure out her surroundings.

"Where am I?" she asked, still very confused. "What happened?"

"You inexplicably fainted," the first paramedic explained. "You're in an ambulance on the way to the hospital. How do you feel? Are you in any pain?"

"I feel fine."

"What does that mean?" asked a still very worried Amy.

"I don't know right now. It could mean a lot of things," the paramedic said. "Again, that's a job for the doctors."

Mike and Eleven's flight came in about an hour late because of some bad weather on the way. They didn't have any checked bags so it was just a matter of getting their bags out of the overhead bin, getting out of the plane (which they were able to do quickly because they were in first class) and heading to the car. Eleven hadn't done anything the entire flight. Mike had respected her privacy and just watched movies and slept. But now he was getting a little worried.

"Everything OK?" he asked.

"I guess," Eleven said weakly.

"They're locked up. There's nothing Nine and Ten can do to you."

"It's not them I'm worried about."

"What then?"

"Ten said something about other living things in the Upside-Down. That's something I never thought about. I mean, there's obviously something causing trouble." Mike didn't really know how to respond, so they just walked the rest of the way to the car without saying anything.

They loaded their bags up in the back then Mike got in the driver's seat and started up the car. Eleven began to turn on her phone, she hadn't really thought about it after the flight.

"Try to look on the bright side," Mike said. "Whatever it is, we now have a place to start. For now, let's just pick up the kids, go home and rest."

"No," Eleven said, reading all the messages she missed on her phone. "Drive to Highland Park Hospital."

"What? Why?"

"Joyce fainted and got rushed there by ambulance." Mike didn't need

any more encouragement. He quickly pulled out of the parking spot and stepped on it to get them out of the garage.

Joyce was given a bed in the emergency room. Amy never left her side. The entire place was hectic, so it was nice that they had some curtains around the bed to give them at least a little privacy.

"How long do I have to stay?" asked Joyce.

"They still don't know what happened. They just want to make sure it won't happen again," Amy said. The curtain in front of the bed was parted and a doctor came in.

"Is everything OK?" he asked.

"I thought you worked in surgery," Amy said. The doctor was Lucas Sinclair, one of Amy's friends from Hawkins.

"I do, but I saw the name 'Joyce Wheeler' on the list of admissions and had to come make sure everything was OK."

"I'm fine," Joyce said.

"What do you remember from the blackout?" Lucas asked, scribbling some notes on a big piece of paper.

"Nothing. I remember talking to Edward, then the next thing I knew, I was in the ambulance. It's like everything in between never happened." Lucas frowned at some pages on Joyce's chart.

"Is something wrong?" Amy asked. Lucas looked up.

"Amy, could you come talk with me for a moment?"

"Um... sure." Amy turned to Joyce. "I hopefully won't be gone for long. I'm sure Lucas just wants me to do some boring paperwork."

"I'm not going anywhere," assured Joyce.

Amy followed Lucas away, down a couple hallways and into an office with a door marked 'Lucas Sinclair, MD'. The line under the name

said 'Chair, Department of Surgery'.

"I didn't know you got promoted," Amy said.

"Happened a week ago, I was going to tell everyone at Thanksgiving. But that's not important right now."

"What is then?"

"Where are Mike and El? I know where she works, so be honest instead of reciting the lie they told you to tell people." Amy sighed.

"They told me to say that they're at an expo in Honolulu, but they actually went to go talk to Nine and Ten. Why is that important?"

"If El went to go talk to Nine and Ten, then something bad is happening."

"She told me it's probably nothing."

"Did she seem sure about that?"

"Not really."

"Then if this kind of stuff is a problem again, we should consider that Joyce's problem might be Upside-Down related."

"I'm hesitating to go there. According to you, El fully had her powers by the time you met her. Joyce is fourteen already and Mike and El haven't said anything about her having anything. Plus, the last time any of us have seen anything from the Upside-Down, we were fourteen and fighting monsters in our middle school. Things have changed." Lucas flipped through Joyce's file once again, then looked back up.

"I'm going to admit Joyce to the hospital for observation. Of course, we're going to focus on the 'medically accepted' explanations for her symptoms. But I'm not going to forget that the Upside-Down could be a part of things." Amy really didn't want the Upside-Down to be a part of their lives again. She hadn't wanted it back when she was in high school, but now that she had children, she feared it even more so. She was even slightly reluctant to consider it as a possible cause

for Joyce's symptoms. Eventually though, the more rational side of her took control.

"OK. That sounds fair," Amy said. "Just promise not to mention this in the group. Even though it was such a long time ago, everyone's still very afraid of it and I know that just the possibility that it might be back will tear some of us apart." Lucas nodded in agreement.

Mike and Eleven showed up about an hour later.

"Is she OK?" asked Mike, the worry apparent in his voice.

"She's OK for now," Lucas said. "Since we don't actually know what happened to make her lose consciousness, we're going to keep her here for at least a day or two to make sure it won't happen again. If nothing pops up, you can take her home in a couple of days." That put most of Mike and Eleven's worries to rest.

"You work with this kind of thing, Lucas?" Eleven asked.

"Not normally. I'm actually the head of surgery now. But I'm taking this case to make sure that she's getting the best care she can."

"Wow, Lucas. That's great of you. Thanks," said Mike. A small smile appeared on Lucas's lips.

"I'm just glad to help out." He turned to Eleven. "El, could you come with me for just a moment? We need to do some paperwork."

"Oh, sure. No problem." Eleven turned to face Mike and Joyce. "I'll be right back."

"OK, see you soon," said Joyce. She seemed to have the same energy in her voice that she normally did. As far as Eleven could tell, she was completely fine. But past experience taught her not to take things like this at face value.

She followed Lucas out of the small room that Joyce had been given, past the nurses' station and into a little corner where Lucas handed her a clipboard with some standard insurance and release forms.

"El..." Lucas started to say before going silent.

"Yeah?" asked Eleven, briefly looking up from the clipboard.

"I promised Amy I wouldn't say anything about this... But, I have to ask." Eleven was starting to get a little scared but didn't say anything. "All of this with Joyce just reminds me of all the stuff that happened to you when you were her age." Eleven clicked her pen shut.

"I understand how this could seem similar, but Joyce hasn't shown any signs at all that she has my... abilities." Eleven still wasn't exactly sure what to call her powers. She usually called them either 'powers' or 'abilities. "It took a lot of effort on Dr. Brenner's part to develop my power and she's really only half me. I don't think it's too likely that she would start to have powers at this point and even if she did, I had made some serious enemies by the time I was her age. There's no way left to get to the Upside-Down and the only other people that would want to hurt Joyce are Nine and Ten. I was just out to see them and I can happily report that they're still very locked up." Eleven did her best to try and make Lucas feel certain that there wasn't anything sinister behind Joyce's condition, even if she wasn't so sure herself. Lucas slowly agreed with Eleven and she got back to finishing her paperwork.

"Why can't we go to the hospital and see her?" Edward asked his dad.

"Joyce is probably under a lot of stress right now," explained Dustin for what must have been the third time. "We can go visit her tomorrow after she's gotten some rest." Dustin set the places at the table. He was trying to have as normal of a night as possible despite the chaos that had happened earlier. "Dinner's almost ready," he announced. He looked around to see that Hunter and James were already there. "Could you go get your sister?" Edward huffed a little bit, but nonetheless went upstairs to get Alice.

He stomped a little bit on the way up, but cooled down when he got to the top step and realized that stomping on the carpet of the second floor just wouldn't have the same effect. Alice's room was on the end of the hall, two doors down from his. He walked down the hall, his footsteps muffled by the thick carpet underneath his feet. Edward

was about to knock on Alice's door when he heard her talking to someone.

"I know I failed, just give me another chance," she said. Her voice was dampened by the door, so she was hard to hear but Edward could tell that she was upset and a little angry. "All I'm asking for is one more chance." Her voice was slightly raspy. Edward was intrigued and quietly put his ear to the door to hear more. "I almost had it but then she got out of range and I lost her. I swear that I can do it. I can get her to join us." There was a long pause, as if Alice was listening to someone answer. "Fine. I'll lay low for a while." It was apparent that whatever conversation Alice was having was coming to an end, so Edward knocked on the door. "Hello?" Alice called in a distinctly different voice.

"It's me," Edward called back. "Mind if I come in?" It was only a second later when Alice said;

"Sure thing." Edward pushed down on the handle and opened the door, not really knowing what to expect on the other side. He was a little surprised that what really was inside was entirely unsurprising. It was just Alice sitting at her computer with her headphones on.

"Dinner's ready. Dad told me to come get you."

"OK. I'll be right down." Alice began closing out of some things on her computer.

"Hey, when I was walking over..." Edward struggled for a minute to properly formulate his question. "Were you talking to someone?"

"Oh yeah, that was just a friend of mine. We were playing a game." Edward didn't know why he hadn't thought of that possibility earlier. Even though Alice didn't play video games as much as him, she still enjoyed them.

"OK. See you in a minute." Edward said. He then left Alice's room. He stood outside her door for a moment wondering why he suddenly felt slightly uneasy.

The compound where Nine and Ten were held certainly wasn't the coziest place in the world. But since Nine and Ten couldn't leave without The Coalition knowing that they were free, it would suffice as it served as the meeting place for the first official gathering of Legion leaders in over thirty years. But of course, the Legion wasn't what it used to be. Most of the senior leaders were killed when One came into power and almost all of those who remained were systematically hunted down by The Coalition over the years.

Before the meeting began, Nine stood out on the landing strip above ground and simply enjoyed the wind in his face. It had been three decades since he had been able to feel the wind or see the sun. The door to the compound opened behind him and Ten walked out.

"What a sorry bunch of losers those are," she said.

"What? The Legion members that came?" Nine asked.

"I wouldn't call them Legion members. Thirty years ago, we would have rejected all of them."

"If they're loyal to the cause, they will do."

Back downstairs in what used to be a prison, everyone that came met in what was the guards' lounge room. Most of them only had distant relations to The Legion before that day, but they all knew the story of its origins and of One's rise and fall. A couple of them jumped a little bit when the big metal door to the room swung open and Nine and Ten came in. They took their places at the ends of the table.

"You would-be rejects are apparently what's left of The Legion," Ten started.

"That means that you are going to be the most powerful people in the world," Nine continued. "You all know One's vision for this world, and even though he is gone, that vision has never been more necessary. Yes, that includes the killing of a lot of people. But in the end, we won't be seen as destroyers. We will be seen as the people that rescued the world from the brink of destruction."

A/N: UPDATE: My life is going to get crazy a week earlier than expected. Even though I am going to continue posting twice a week, I am beginning to question the sanity of that decision. I have however decided that if I'm away from my computer, I'm just going to skip that update unless I have a bunch of chapters already written in advance (I don't at this point). I will let you know in advance when the next update is and right now I can say that the next chapter is coming on Wednesday, but I will be out of town on next Saturday.

Thank you to everyone who has been reading this and especially to the people who have taken the time to write reviews. I really love reading everything you have to say.

6. Chapter 6: Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving was always a happy time of year. The entire group from Hawkins alternated spending the holiday one year with their families back at home, then the next in Chicago with all their friends. That year happened to be one where they stayed in Chicago and the Wheelers were hosting.

It had been two months since Joyce left the Hospital and things had certainly quieted down. She hadn't fainted any more times or even felt similarly ill in any way. Those months had generally been just a pretty boring time. But that boredom was to come to an end on Thanksgiving. Most people showed up at around noon and spent the whole day over. The main exception was Jonathan Byers, who showed up promptly at 9:00 AM to start cooking. Over the years, the group had just learned to trust Jonathan to make a good meal. Plus, he enjoyed it.

"How's it going?" Mike asked as he began staring into an empty oven with Jonathan. He tried to get interested in what his brother-in-law was doing.

"It's going pretty good. I'm glad that you guys have two ovens. I'm going to heat this one up, cook some of the stuff that can cool down, then get the turkey in while I fire up the other one." Mike just nodded along. He was excited for the meal, but still glad that he didn't have to prepare it.

Eleven walked down the stairs just then.

"Are you just getting up now?" Jonathan asked.

"Yeah, it was a late night at work yesterday." Eleven yawned, as if to drive her point home.

"Where are the kids?" asked Jonathan. "When do I get to see my favorite niece and nephew?" Jonathan was a great uncle, even thought he didn't have any kids of his own. He had been with the same girlfriend for almost ten years at that point, and even though they loved each other, neither really wanted to get married.

"James is downstairs watching TV and I think Joyce is still asleep," Mike said. Eleven walked over to counter and poured herself a cup of coffee from the pot that Mike had already made.

"Since when does Joyce sleep in this late?" asked Jonathan.

"Pretty much even since she became teenager," said Mike.

The rest of that morning wasn't all that crazy. Jonathan took his time to prepare a couple of small dishes, but otherwise things were pretty quiet. The first people to show up was Sarah. She didn't have anyone with her. She was barely through the door when Lucas came in behind her. About five minutes later, Nancy, Steve and Barb walked in and joined the group. Then Lucy, another one of their friends from school. She also didn't have anyone with her. She had been in a long term relationship, but they had broken up just about a month earlier. Then, Jonathan's girlfriend June came in. Last but not least, Amy, Dustin and their kids arrived.

Things really picked up at about 4 PM when everybody rushed for the kitchen to cook a thing or two. The kitchen became the center of some strange kind of half-organized chaos. Since Mike wasn't actually cooking anything and didn't want to be trapped in the kitchen, he went to the basement to camp out. Once down the stairs, he was a little surprised to see Dustin there as well.

"Avoiding the kitchen?" asked Dustin.

"Yep." said Mike.

"Good idea."

"Kind of what I thought." Mike sat down on one of the chairs. They were quiet for a while while they each tried to think of something to talk about. "Do you want to know what's a little weird?" asked Mike.

"What?"

"Whenever James wants to insist that he's mature enough to do stuff, he always points out that he's eleven."

"How is that weird?"

"What if Hunter always insisted that he's Amy?"

"Your wife is named Eleven. That's a good point. That is kind of strange." There was another sort of awkward moment of near-silence. The only thing they could hear was the work going on in the kitchen. "How's work going?" asked Dustin in an attempt to make conversation.

"Pretty well. Though, it is a little strange to have Joyce in my class."

"I guess the school just wanted to give her the best chemistry teacher they could." Mike laughed.

"Thanks."

"How's work going for El?" Mike slowly stopped laughing and looked at Dustin as if he had just tried to summon a demon. "I know where she works, you don't have to keep all the secrets from me. Plus, we had a little scare when you went to go see Nine and Ten so I think I deserve to know at least something. What happened at that meeting?" Mike took a deep breath and thought about some things he had been actively trying not to think about.

"I still don't really know what happened. But... we're scared too. I'm just glad to know that those two are still locked up far away from here."

Edward Henderson was able to escape the kitchen after a little while. He managed to sneak upstairs and knocked on Joyce's door. No answer came for a while. He knew that Joyce was there even if she wasn't answering.

"It's just Edward," he said through the door. Still no response. "I'm not here to get you back down to the kitchen." A response came a couple seconds later.

"I'm not sure if you're lying or not, but come in anyway." Edward cracked a smile and quietly pushed open the door.

Joyce was sitting on the floor next to her bed messing around with a really big, really old walkie-talkie. Edward softly closed the door and sat down next to Joyce.

"What is that?" he asked.

"I don't know. I found it in a bunch of my dad's old stuff." Joyce fidgeted with a bunch of knobs and stuff.

"Do you actually know what you're doing?"

"No idea." There was some static coming out, but the volume was set pretty low so it wasn't all that annoying.

"We haven't really talked since... you know."

"Since I passed out inexplicably and got taken off to the hospital?" Edward didn't really want to say it quite as plainly as that, but that was what he meant.

"Yeah. How've you been doing?"

"Fine. I haven't fainted if that's what you're asking." Joyce pulled the antenna out of the radio. "What were we talking about when I fainted?"

"I don't remember. Do you?"

"Nope." Joyce looked up at Edward. "So, do you want to talk about something?" This caught Edward off guard for some reason.

"What? Do... you?" he stumbled through his words.

"Sure," Joyce laughed. "We can talk about anything that doesn't have to do with me passing out, or Thanksgiving dinner." Edward started laughing a little too.

"Do you think it's kinda weird that our parents hang out with their high school friends so much?"

"Oh good. I'm glad I'm not the only one that finds that strange." They both laughed.

The static stopped coming out of the radio for just a moment.

"What was that?" Edward asked.

"I don't know." Joyce gingerly turned the dials to try and get the signal back. It took a moment but eventually, she got it back. Both Joyce and Edward got in close to try and hear it.

"I think it's a voice," Edward said. "Do you think someone else around here has that kind of radio.

"I have to imagine that because this thing is so old, it has bad range. It would have to be someone really close." Joyce turned to volume up.

"You know the plan," said a very deep voice, coming out of the thirty five year old speaker. "I trust that you will be able to overcome your temptations and stick to it." There was some quiet background noise when the voice stopped talking.

"Do you think someone else is going to talk?"

"NO!" yelled the radio voice. Edward and Joyce jumped back a little bit in surprise. "You need to learn patience. You knew when he gave you your abilities that you would have to be careful. Don't worry, though. You will reap your reward in due time."

"Joyce! Dinner's ready," Eleven's voice came from downstairs. "Is Edward up there with you?"

"I'm here, Mrs. Wheeler. Just give us one second," Edward called back.

"Nothing is out of the ordinary. Do you understand?" asked the voice on the radio. "Just know that he is growing impatient with your want to be reckless." A couple of seconds later, static came back out of the radio. It was much louder this time since Joyce had turned up the volume to hear the voice. Edward covered his ears while Joyce quickly turned off the radio.

"What was that?" Edward asked.

"No idea," said Joyce. Both of them were still trying to figure out what had just happened as they hurried down the stairs to Thanksgiving dinner.

"Why do I have to sit at the kids table?" asked Joyce as soon as she saw the place settings for dinner.

"Because you're a kid," Mike insisted while picking up some dishes of food to bring to the big table. "We have too many people to fit at one table. That's the case every year. You know that."

"Then why does Alice get to sit with you guys?"

"I think she has more in common with the adults now than the kids."

"But she's not that much older than me."

"Stop trying to fight it. I don't think you'll die if you have to sit with the kids. Edward is going to be there. You seem to be OK talking with him." That got Joyce to stop complaining.

Everyone took their places at the table. For the first little bit, everyone was too occupied with eating to say anything.

"Do you have any interesting stories, Lucy?" Lucas asked after a while when everyone slowed down eating and the lack of conversation just seemed like dead air. Lucy, being a psychologist, always had a couple of fun stories from her patients. She knew she really shouldn't tell them, but she did anyway among her close friends. She swallowed the mashed potatoes in her mouth, then got started;

"One guy I was talking to the other day kept thinking that things were falling on him. I had to try so hard not to laugh when he cried in pain and insisted that a pencil sharpener fell on him from my ceiling." That drew a laugh from the group, even though they knew they really shouldn't be laughing at it. "Wow," Lucy remarked. "I am being so unprofessional right now."

"Yes," Steve said before pausing to swallow some food. "But it's still funny." They talked and laughed for only a couple more minutes before Eleven's phone rang quite loudly. She pulled it out of her

pocket and looked at the caller ID.

"Sorry, this is work. I have to take it," Eleven said before slipping into the next room. Those who remained at the table got quiet so they could eavesdrop on Eleven's half of the conversation. "This is El Wheeler," Eleven said. The person on the other end spoke, but nobody but Eleven could hear whoever it was. "Can this wait 'till tomorrow? I'm at Thanksgiving dinner... Nobody else can take care of it?... I understand. I'm coming." Mike heard Eleven get closer and he didn't want her to know they were all eavesdropping.

"El, Lucas just told a great story while you were gone," Mike said as soon as his wife got back.

"Don't lie. I know you were all listening in." Mike gave up and nodded, admitting it. "I am so sorry, guys. But I have to go into work."

"What? But it's Thanksgiving," Nancy said.

"Just the life of a corporate executive I guess," Eleven said. The lie that all the Coalition agents told people was that they worked in an office of the officially registered Multi-National Holdings Incorporated. It was common enough that nobody would think twice and bland enough that nobody would ask further questions. Most of the people at the table that night knew that Eleven was actually a secret agent, but there were a couple exceptions. Jonathan hadn't told June anything about the monster or the Upside-Down, and Alice was also in the dark. "Please, continue to eat and have fun without me."

"Impossible," Mike said. He stood up and gave Eleven a quick kiss before she had to leave.

The elevator dinged softly as Eleven stepped out to see more chaos than usual at Coalition Headquarters. Agent Read hurried over to her with a gray file in his hand.

"What happened?" Eleven was now less annoyed that she was taken away from Thanksgiving and more curious as to what could be causing all of this.

"The vigilante struck again," Read said. He handed Eleven the file in his hand.

"Why did I have to get called in for this? Every other time this has happened, I just got it in the morning briefing."

"Well, this time he wasn't in Tokyo or Switzerland. He was in Chicago." This piqued Eleven's interest.

"Where?"

"Only about three blocks from here. It was a big new skyscraper just built by Intercontinental Power Incorporated." Eleven opened the file and started scanning its contents but she knew she could still get information faster by asking about it.

"What did he take this time?"

"That's the main reason why we called you," Eleven looked up. "He didn't take anything. He just made a mess and left a note."

"What did the note say?"

"There's a copy of it at the back of the file." Eleven quickly flipped to the back of the file and found a black and white copy of the note. It read: 'Dear Coalition, Please investigate me. Sincerely, Intercontinental Power Inc.'

"That's one way to get our attention," Eleven said.

A/N: Again, there will most likely be no update this Saturday because I'm going to be out of town and don't know if I'll have internet or not. Thanks, everyone for reading and please leave a review!

7. Chapter 7: The Company

A/N: If you're reading this on Saturday, that means I have internet where I am and was able to post this. The next update will be on Wednesday. As always, thanks for reading and please let me know what you think so far.

Intercontinental Power Incorporated (usually just called IPI because the name was a mouthful otherwise) was an energy systems contractor. They mainly built big equipment for power plants. Most people found this boring. In fact, The Coalition found them pretty boring right up until that fateful Thanksgiving night. The man in charge at their shiny new Chicago skyscraper was a woman named Susan Jones. She didn't have much in the way of a family, so she was willing to work on Thanksgiving. She was up for a promotion and that just seemed like another way to try and get it. That night had been for the most part; pretty boring. Just the same as every other night. At about 8:00 PM, Susan began to shut down her laptop and pack it away in her briefcase when one of her coworkers came running through her office door. Because he was out of breath, Susan was able to get the first word in.

"Why were you been running?" she asked. A little smile came across her face. She and that coworker, Justin, were usually a little flirty with each other, so Susan was expecting some sort of witty response. That wasn't what she got.

"The research labs were trashed by someone." He drew in another breath before continuing. "A bunch of government agents just showed up." Susan left her laptop on the desk and went with Justin towards the elevators.

The kids table at Thanksgiving with the Wheelers was in a different room from the normal table. So news that Eleven had left reached them later. Once everyone was done eating, they all stacked their plates in the kitchen and then decided to leave the rest of the clean-up to Mike. A couple of the others helped out, but it was mainly just him.

Joyce and Edward went back upstairs to try and figure out what had happened with Mike's old radio before dinner.

"We didn't have a chance to talk about it before dinner," Edward said. "What do you think that was? Did it sound like one of your neighbors?"

"I don't know," Joyce replied. She was only half paying attention. She was mainly focused on trying to get the signal back on the radio. Edward let her do her work.

"I think I heard something," he said after a while of just listening to static.

"Really?"

"Yeah. Go back a little." Joyce slowly turned back the dial and the static quieted down and the voice returned.

"You did well," the voice said. There was silence after that. "Make no mistake. You still need to learn more patience. But that was a good start."

"I really wish we could hear whoever is on the other side of that," Edward said. "They must be using another radio. Why can't we hear them?"

"Give me a minute," Joyce said. She concentrated as hard as she could and turned the dial really slowly to try and find the other end of the line.

"But the agent left. She might have found us out," said another voice. It was so distorted that there was no way to tell who it was, but it was certainly a different voice.

"The agent is unimportant. She still has no idea what we are and can't do anything to stop us," said the original voice. Joyce and Edward listened intently, neither dared say anything for fear of missing something coming out of the radio. "The real problem is that there seems to be another player in the mix."

"What is it?"

"He still doesn't know, but he says it feels old and familiar." There was another pause and Joyce and Edward worried for a second that they had lost the signal from the second person. Joyce concentrated harder and turned the dial back as little as she could.

"What should I do?" asked the second voice.

"Nothing, for now. Stay where you are and stay out of sight. You are still our greatest asset in your world."

"Yes, sir." The static returned and Joyce quickly turned down the volume on the radio. She drew in a big gasp of air and suddenly noticed that she was out of breath. Edward looked up at her and reeled back all of a sudden.

"Joyce, your nose is gushing blood," he said. Joyce stood up and looked in the mirror above her desk. Her nose was, in fact, gushing blood. Luckily, there were some tissues there. "Are you OK?" Edward asked.

"I'm fine," Joyce said. She actually felt spent, but was slowly getting better.

Since it was so close to the Coalition base, Eleven just walked over to the scene of the crime. There was already a police zone set up around the entrance, but Eleven just showed her ID and walked in with Agent Read. Once inside, they found that another agent, Agent Thompson, was in charge.

"Director, I didn't know you were coming," said Thompson.

"This case drew my interest," Eleven replied. She looked around to see what was going on. There wasn't too much in the lobby, basically just a bunch of people from the company talking to Coalition agents trying to figure out what was going on. "What's happened so far?" Agent Thompson dropped her sense of surprise from when Eleven had walked in and got very serious very quickly.

"All we know is that most of the underground research labs were trashed. The description of the attack matches exactly to that of the

vigilante that we've been tracking except for two things."

"And those are?" Eleven asked. She had tried to become as informed about the case as possible, but they weren't allowed to read files or discuss it on the way over in the interest of keeping things classified.

"He didn't take anyone or anything, and this place wasn't under investigation by us."

"Whoever it was certainly knows what The Coalition is, so that narrows things down a little."

The elevator on the far wall of the lobby dinged and a tall woman and a slightly smaller man got out. She walked with purpose over to Eleven, Read and Thompson.

"My name is Susan Jones," the woman introduced herself. "I'm the manager of this building."

"Good evening, Ms. Jones," Eleven said. "My name is Elle Wheeler, my organization and I will be investigating the break-in in your labs in connection with some similar incidents."

"Can I ask what organization you represent?" asked Susan.

"I'm afraid I can't say. It's classified."

"Well then *I'm* afraid I can't let you in here without a warrant." Susan's expression remained unchanged.

"Ms. Jones... While I understand your concerns, I can assure you that we are by far the most qualified people to do this job and if we spend time getting a warrant, all we will be doing is wasting precious time that we could be using to find whoever did this and protect your company from future attacks." Eleven chose not to mention the note that they received that told them to investigate IPI. Susan thought for a moment before reaching a decision.

"Fine. I'll let you in but I'm coming with."

"That sounds agreeable."

Mike and the rest of the adults back at the house all sat down in the living room after the dishes were in the dishwasher and the kids were off doing their own things. Mike was the last to sit down, having just finished up in the kitchen.

"Sorry that took so long, guys. It might have gone faster if someone had helped me," he said. Everyone mumbled an excuse, but Mike didn't care. He meant that as more of a joke than anything else. "What have you guys been talking about?"

"We didn't really have a specific topic of conversation," Amy said.

"Alice, how's senior year going?" asked Lucas. Alice had been quietly sitting on one of the chairs in the living room for a couple minutes, just listening in on the conversation.

"Um, it's going good," she said.

"Anything more than that?" Nancy asked. "What colleges have you been looking at for next year?" Alice seemed a little caught off guard by that question.

"Ah... I don't know."

"What?" Dustin was confused. "You've wanted to go to MIT for years. Are you scared that you won't get in for some reason?"

"Yeah. That's it," Alice replied. Dustin turned to the rest of the group to start bragging about his daughter.

"Alice got a 35 on her ACT last year and has been the top of her class since freshman year. She forgot about her summer homework assignments, but she got them done and now is on track to be on top again."

"That's really great, Alice," Mike said. "You know, El was top of the class when we graduated."

"I think you mentioned that before."

"Is everything OK, Alice?" Dustin asked. She seemed a little more reserved than usual. Normally, she was talkative and excited to talk

to people about school. Sure, that was unusual for people her age, but that was just how she was.

"I have a little bit of a headache," Alice said. That was a lie.

"Do you want to go lie down? I'm sure Joyce would let you use her room." Alice seemed to fidget a bit when Joyce was mentioned.

"No, I'll be fine."

The IPI labs were just underground. An elevator from the lobby took them down. When the doors opened, it looked like a scene out of a horror movie. Most of the lights were smashed in so the room was dark. Tables were turned on their sides, lab equipment was smashed in and, in some cases, embedded in the walls. A couple of police officers had been there, but as soon as they found the letter addressed to The Coalition, they left it for their agents.

Eleven, Read and Susan got out of the elevator and stepped gingerly over some of the things strewn across the floor.

"We'd like to have some of our agents come down to start working on forensic records," Read said. "Would that be OK?"

"Sure," Susan responded. Read started calling the forensics team on a radio while Eleven and Susan went on. "Why were you called instead of the normal police? Or even the FBI?"

"That's classified. I'm sorry. I really wish I could tell you more."

"Director!" called Read from where he was using his radio. "I found something." Eleven walked over to him and he handed her a big envelope. 'Look underground' was written on the front of it.

"That's the same handwriting as the other note, isn't it?" asked Eleven.

"As far as I can tell it is." Eleven stared at the neat writing. Something told her that she had seen it even before the first note that day. It didn't come to her, so she filed that thought into the back of her mind and opened the envelope. Only two pieces of paper were in it.

"Blueprints," Read noticed. "It looks like those are the blueprints for this basement." The blueprints showed a side view of three sub basements. "What's on the other page." Eleven pulled the other sheet to the front. It showed the same three sub basements, but also another shaft and a fourth sub basement about a hundred feet deeper.

"Look at the dates on them," Eleven said. "This one with the extra basement was filed before they started construction to get planning approval, and the other one was filed about three months after that." Eleven turned to face Susan. "What do you know about this extra basement?" she asked. Susan looked closely at the plans. She only looked up when she heard the elevator open again. The forensics team arrived and immediately got to work.

"I think that was planned but never built because it would have been too expensive," Susan said. Read looked over to Eleven. They had been working together long enough that she knew what he was asking. Eleven closed her eyes and began feeling around with her mind. She didn't use her powers much anymore, but they still came in handy sometimes. Eleven opened her eyes again after about thirty seconds.

"It did get built," she said. Then she pointed to the wall off to her right. "There's an elevator shaft hidden behind that wall leading down to a secret extra level of the basement." Susan's mouth was open in amazement.

"How were you able to do that?" she asked. This time, it was Read who replied.

"I'm sorry, mam. It's-"

"Classified. I get it," Susan interrupted.

Whoever had broken into the IPI lab had broken the lock to the secret elevator. Eleven and Read pulled a little and a whole panel of the wall moved out of the way to reveal the small passage over to a normal looking stainless steel elevator door. Eleven and Read simply walked over. Susan followed, but more timidly. A strange, secret organization showed up to investigate a massive break-in in which

nothing was stolen and now two secret agents were leading her towards a previously-hidden part of the building. This kind of thing might have been normal for Eleven and Read, but it was frightening for Susan.

The ride down was quick and silent. Unknown of what might be on the other side of the door, Eleven and Read drew pistols that had been hidden. This just made Susan's heart rate rise as she got even more scared. The doors parted, but nothing scary awaited them on the other side. In fact, nothing awaited them on the other side. Just darkness.

"Do you see a light switch?" Read asked. Eleven used the small amount of light coming out of the elevator to locate a light switch on the cold, concrete wall. The fluorescent lights fluttered on to reveal something that reminded Eleven of a high school gym locker room. The main difference was that instead of stinky gym clothes hanging in all the lockers, there were white hazmat suits.

"What is this place?" asked Susan.

"I have just as good of an idea as you," said Read. Eleven had some ideas of her own, but she decided to keep them to herself. They walked around the room slowly, examining every detail. Mostly, there were just a bunch of numbered lockers with hazmat suits, but there were a couple of suits hanging on the wall without a locker. Opposite the elevator was a big security door with a very pleasant sign that read: 'NO ENTRY BEYOND THIS POINT WITHOUT ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION'. "What do we do now?" asked Read.

"We go further," Eleven said insistently. She pulled one of the free hazmat suits off the wall and started putting it on. Read began to do the same.

"Are you two crazy?" asked Susan. "You don't know what's back there. It could be dangerous."

"The only way to find out is to go look. You can come with Agent Read and me if you want, or you can stay here and wait for us."

"I will be staying here," Susan decided very quickly. She sat down on one of the benches in the middle of the room.

"Whatever you want," Eleven said while zipping up the main part of the suit. "We're still going in there. If we don't come back to check in in thirty minutes, go upstairs and tell the forensics team that they need to send in someone to find us."

With the protective suits on, Eleven and Read left Susan behind and went into the exclusion zone behind the big, scary door. On the other side was a long, sterile concrete hallway with another big door at the other end. The walk to the other end seemed to take forever. Eleven began to get a bad feeling about what they were doing.

They eventually made it to the big door. On the side of it were two big buttons labeled 'OPEN' and 'CLOSE'. Eleven went to press the 'OPEN' one, but once her gloved thumb contacted it, she began to hesitate. She looked over to Read. He noticed her hesitation and nodded, letting her know to go ahead. Eleven's courage returned. She pressed the button and the door quickly slid open.

The two agents were hit with a blast of cold air and what seemed to be snow. Pushing past it, Eleven and Read continued into the room. Eleven began examining some of the equipment around the door. It was all pretty standard computer equipment. The only thing that Eleven found to be out of the ordinary was that it had no network connection at all. Not to the building's internal network and certainly not to the internet.

"Elle!" Read called. Eleven looked up to see him staring at something around a small corner. "What do you think that is?" Eleven walked over to see what Read was looking at. Her heart dropped as soon as she could look around the corner in the room and see the big slimy mass coming out of the wall. "I have no idea what that is. What's your best guess?"

"I don't have to guess. I'm all too familiar with that," Eleven said. "That is a gate to the Upside-Down."

"I thought you said that whole place was closed off thirty years ago."

"I guess I was wrong." In that moment, Eleven was thinking less about how someone opened a gateway to the Upside-Down and more about what Ten told her. She couldn't help but think that Will was somewhere in there.

8. Chapter 8: The Field Trip

"Remember that you don't have class tomorrow," Mike said to his chemistry class. He got a fair-sized cheer out of most of the class. Joyce just sat at her desk and smiled. "We'll meet at the flagpole out front at 8:15 sharp. If you aren't there by then, we're not going to wait for you." Mike had been planning this field trip for about two months. They were going out to an education center in the city where there was some nice equipment. There, they could run a bunch of experiments that they didn't have the materials for in the classroom. The bell rang and everyone either packed up the last few things on their desk or stood up and started walking out. "OK, see everyone tomorrow!" Mike called to the students leaving.

After about three minutes, the room was empty except for Mike and Joyce.

"Why aren't you going to lunch?" Mike asked.

"I wanted to ask you something."

"And?"

"There's a part of the field trip permission form that says we can either take the bus home with everyone else, or if you sign another box, we can stay in the city."

"And you're expecting that I'm just going to let you stay in the city after we're done?"

"Please? Uncle Steve and Aunt Nancy already said Barb can. We just want to go shopping." Mike sighed.

"Ask your mother. If she says yes, it's OK with me." Joyce's face lit up.

"Thank you so much! You're the best!" She gave her dad a hug, then ran out of the room.

"Do you really think she's old enough?" Mike asked Eleven on the phone during his lunch break.

"She's fourteen. Remember what we were doing when we were fourteen?"

"We were just kids starting high school."

"We had also defeated two dangerous telepathic terrorists at least two and a half inter-dimensional monsters by that point." Mike thought about that last point for a moment.

"The terrorists were Nine and Ten. The first monster was the Demogorgon, and the second one was One. What was the half?"

"The Demogorgon the second time. Some piece of Will was still in there so I'm only counting that as a half-monster."

"Well, yes. But we're getting off topic."

"My point is; I don't see any problem with Joyce going shopping in the city. In the worst case, I'm still in the city." Ever since the discovery of the new gate to the Upside-Down on Thanksgiving, Eleven had spent long days and nights in the city investigating it.

"OK. I'll sign the form."

"Great. I have to go, love you."

"Love you too." Eleven hung up her phone as Agent Read walked up to her. It was the first Monday after the Thanksgiving break. The first work day. The Coalition investigators decided to wait until then to question all the workers at IPI so that they didn't accidentally scare any off.

"All of the scientists are upstairs being questioned," Read said. The Coalition had proved their legitimacy to Susan, so she felt much more comfortable allowing them into the company to investigate. They had taken over half of the fourth floor to use as a sort of on-site base. It was mainly used as a point of communication between the IPI building and the main Coalition base. But that day, it would also be used for interrogation.

One of the big corner offices had been taken over for that purpose. The windows had been covered to make it a more secure room and

most of the furniture had been taken out. At the moment, five scientists were in there, talking to a Coalition agent. The Coalition was trying to figure out if any of them had any involvement with what was going on downstairs.

"Have any of them said anything yet?"asked Eleven.

"Nothing yet. They're all denying any involvement. They say that they don't know anything about the secret lab downstairs." Eleven stared at the documents in front of her. They were mainly pictures of the lab below and the gate. "Is something wrong?" Read asked.

"Something looks strange about the way this gate was opened."

"What do you mean?"

"The last time we saw one of these, in Hawkins, it was complete chaos when it opened and everyone got out of there as quick as possible. Then in the week after that, they put up some temporary equipment to study it."

"Is something different here?"

"Everything down there looks too permanent. It looks like the entire lab was purpose-built for studying a gate to the Upside-Down."

"Do you think they opened it on purpose?"

"I don't like jumping to conclusions, but that's what the initial evidence is suggesting."

Mike counted their field trip as a success. Of course, there were a couple of annoying kids that messed around most of the time, but the others seemed to get a lot of good out of it. After they were done, most of the kids boarded the bus. A couple others whose parents allowed them to stay in the city signed out with Mike and eventually, only Joyce and Barb were left.

"You guys be safe. OK?" Mike said.

"Don't worry, dad. It won't be a problem," Joyce said.

"I know, but I'm your father. I can't help but worrying. Now, remember: you guys are taking the train that leaves at 6:30 and Aunt Nancy is going to pick you two up at the station near home."

"We remember, Uncle Mike. We'll be fine," Barb said. Mike smiled, nodded and then got on the bus with the other kids before he had the chance to say anything more. Joyce and Barb stayed around until they saw the big, yellow school bus drive off. Once it was finally gone, the girls turned to each other.

"So what do you want to do?" asked Joyce.

"I don't know," said Barb. "I didn't actually think that far."

"Me neither." They stayed on that sidewalk for a couple of minutes while they tried to think of something to do.

"Why don't we just go and get something to eat?" Barb asked.

"I certainly can't argue with that."

It took about twenty minutes to walk into the city center and then another fifteen minutes before they could find a restaurant they could agree on. It was just a small pizza place on one of the quieter streets. Joyce took a sip of her lemonade while waiting for the pizza.

"So what's with you and Edward?" Barb asked. This question seemed to Joyce as if it came out of nowhere.

"What is with me and Edward?"

"I don't know. You've been friends with him your whole life, but something seems different between the two of you."

"What do you mean by 'different'?"

"I mean... You two seem to be spending a lot of time alone together. I let you guys just be on Thanksgiving, but..." Barb decided to just get to the point. "Do you like him?" Joyce was about to quickly answer 'no', but then she thought for a moment. She had known Edward for her whole life and because of their parents' relationship, they always seemed like cousins to each other. But when Joyce really examined

it, Edward was someone who was always there for her and really seemed to care about her. Maybe she did like him.

"I don't know. Maybe." Barb smiled. "But, sometimes it feels like we're cousins and that's just weird.

"But you're not. It would only be weird if you make it weird. Look, I'm not going to force you into anything. But if you think about it and want it to happen, go for it!" Joyce nodded along idly. She certainly was listening to what Barb had to say, but she wasn't fully there. She was thinking about what this could mean.

"I need to use the bathroom." was the only thing Joyce could think to say. Barb laughed.

"OK, but don't think you're getting out of talking about this more when you get back." Joyce smiled.

"No. I know I'm not getting off that easy." She looked around the small restaurant for a bathroom, but didn't see one. "Excuse me, do you have a bathroom here?" Joyce asked one of the servers.

"No. Unfortunately our toilet broke yesterday but the convenience store around the corner will be happy to let you use theirs until ours is repaired."

"Thank you very much." Joyce explained the complicated bathroom situation to Barb, then left to go use it. Outside of the restaurant, despite being on the street with hundreds of other people, Joyce felt alone with her thoughts. She was able to think about some fully reason why the restaurant's toilet was broken, but mostly she was able to think about everything Barb was talking about.

"One of the analysts was digging through some old files and found something interesting," Agent Read said, rushing into Eleven's office. Eleven quickly saved what she was working on and turned her attention to Agent Read.

"What is it?" Read dropped a dusty old file on her desk. "How old is this? Is it from before we digitized everything?"

"It's from the mid 90's; back when we were just starting to digitize everything. You must have been in post-grad when this happened." Eleven started flipping through the slightly yellow pages of the file.

"What is it?" she asked again.

"It's the record of the investigation of an attack by the mysterious vigilante at a small company that would later grow to become Intercontinental Power Incorporated."

"IPI got hit by this guy before?"

"Yes, but that time was a little more routine than this time. The Coalition was going to arrest the guy managing that office and we had dispatched a team to the company five minutes before the attack, but he was out five minutes before the team arrived."

"Who was the office manager?"

"A scientist named Dr. Wallace Anderson." Eleven looked up from the file when she heard that name.

"That was the guy One recruited to help kill the Demogorgon. Wasn't it?"

"That was. We searched all of his stuff after he disappeared with the vigilante and found mainly a bunch of research on the Upside-Down."

"This just supports my hypothesis that they opened the gate on purpose. Wallace probably recruited some people to help him and they continued his work after he was gone."

"I'll get that down to the research department and see what they can find." Eleven's phone rang right at this moment.

"Go ahead with that," Eleven said to Read. "Let me know anything you find." Read nodded and left the room. Eleven accepted the call. "Hello?"

"Mom?" Joyce's voice asked from the other end of the line. Her voice was uneven and it sounded like she was sniffing.

"Joyce, is everything OK?"

"No."

"I'll come to pick you up. Where are you?"

"The police station."

Eleven walked into the police station and immediately saw Joyce and Barb sitting in the waiting room.

"Joyce! What happened?" Joyce looked up from the floor and stood up when she saw her mother.

"I got mugged." Joyce sniffled again. "We were eating at a restaurant. Their toilet was broken and I had to go around the corner to the convenience store to use the bathroom. On the way back, a guy pulled me into an alley and yelled at me to give him my phone and purse."

"Oh my god. Did he take it? We need to cancel your credit card."

"No. He got scared and ran. I still have everything."

"That's still pretty scary. Let's get you two back home."

A/N: Thanks for reading, please leave a review! The next update will be on Saturday. That next update will be the last chapter before I go on a short hiatus.

9. Chapter 9: The Attack

The text Edward got from Joyce read: 'Come over. I need to talk to you about something.' It was a Friday afternoon, and he didn't have homework so he was able to leave immediately. In fifteen minutes, Edward was at the Wheelers' front door. Joyce opened it for him.

"Hi," she said very plainly.

"Hi," Edward said back. "Who else is here?"

"Just my dad. My mom is at work and James is... somewhere." Joyce closed the door behind Edward and then led the way up to her room. Edward took the desk chair and Joyce sat down on the bed. They didn't say much for a while.

"Did you actually ask me here to talk about something or are we just going to sit here?"

"Remember when I almost got mugged three days ago?"

"Well, yeah. I won't forget that too quickly. It's good that that guy ran away."

"That's not exactly how it went." Edward wheeled his chair a little closer to Joyce. She squirmed around a little as he got closer.

"Joyce... what happened?" Joyce took a deep breath and gathered the bravery to start.

"Like I said, that guy pulled me into the alley and started yelling at me. Then he started getting closer to me and I just wanted him to go away." Joyce paused for a moment to take another deep breath.

"Then what happened?" Edward asked in the most calming voice he could.

"The guy flew back and hit the wall of the building behind him." Edward was confused.

"Like... he tripped and fell backwards?"

"Like... his feet left the ground and he flew pretty fast into the wall. I still don't understand it, but I know I did that. I can... make things move. With my mind." Edward shook his head.

"No, you can't."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm sure the guy just ran away and you're trying to come up with some sort of reason. I don't know psychology but I think it's normal to do stuff like this after some trauma."

"I'm not making this up!" insisted Joyce.

"At least let me get your dad. He should hear about this."

"No." Edward got up.

"I know you don't want him to help right now, but trust me, this is good for you." Edward turned around and opened the door to go get Mike. He was about to go through when the handle was pulled out of his hand and the door slammed shut. He opened it again and it slammed shut again. Edward turned around to see Joyce standing as well. A small trickle of blood was coming out of her nose.

"No," she said again.

Eleven had been working for seemingly unending hours when she noticed it was getting close to 8PM. She tried to rub the sleep out of her eyes, but it was no use. She saved the document she was working on on her computer, locked it, then stood up, turned off the lights in her office and started heading towards the elevator.

"Done for the day, director?" one of the agents asked on the way.

"No. I'm just going to head around the corner and get some coffee."

"You have to go home some time, you know."

"I'll go home when I'm done."

"Suit yourself." Eleven got in the elevator and stared into the office as she waited for the doors to close. She liked the orderly chaos of it. Some people were just sitting at their desk working on their computers, others were frantically running around the room, but everyone had their place. The doors closed and the elevator started going down. Eleven felt like a weight was lifted off her shoulders.

Just around the corner was a nice little coffee shop. It was quiet, especially that late, so Eleven was free to just relax for a moment. She got her coffee, then called Mike. The phone rang three times before he picked up.

"Hello?" he said.

"It's me."

"Hey! How long till you get home?"

"I don't actually know at this point. I still have a bunch of stuff I want to get done." There was a pause. "How are things over there?"

"Pretty quiet. James just called and asked if he could spend the night with his friend. I said yes. And Joyce has been upstairs talking to Edward for about two hours now." Eleven laughed quietly. "What's so funny?" Mike asked.

"Those two have been spending a lot of time together."

"What? Do you think they're dating or something?"

"Do you think it would be too bad if they were?" Mike had to think about that.

"No. I suppose not." Neither could think of anything else to talk about.

"I should probably get back to work."

"OK." Mike sounded a little sad about that. "Let me know when you're on your way home."

"I wouldn't stay up waiting for me."

"I'm going to." Eleven smiled.

"Until later, then."

"Until later."

"How long has this been going on for?" Edward asked. It took him a little while to get over the initial shock after Joyce slammed the door on him. He was a little scared of her initially, but she pretty quickly cooled down and that feeling went away.

"I don't know," Joyce said. "When I... move stuff, it feels kind of like how it felt when we were listening to that voice on my dad's old radio. It's like whatever's happening to me... it's developing. Progressing."

"I still think we should tell your dad."

"No. He would freak out or something."

"Why did you tell me?"

"Because I needed to talk to someone about it. It was killing me just keeping it to myself. I was scared." Edward walked over to Joyce and put his hand on her shoulder.

"I'm here for you," he reassured. "My opinion is still that you should tell someone that can do something about it, but I'm going to leave that to you. If you want, your secret is safe with me." Joyce was happy that she had someone she could talk to. Someone who understood her.

As soon as the elevator doors opened, Eleven knew something was wrong. But she only had a fraction of a second to take in the image of the destroyed office before she was hit on the head. Head throbbing, Eleven fell to the floor, catching herself at the last minute. She felt a cold piece of metal press against her neck as well as her wrists. She stumbled to her feet and tried to use her powers, but nothing happened. The thing around her neck was one of the collars designed to prevent her from using her powers and she had handcuffs around

her wrists.

"Stay down!" yelled someone whose face Eleven didn't really see. He hit her again and she fell back to the floor. Eleven was dragged over to the wall and once her vision stopped being fuzzy from the hit, she got her first good look around. About two thirds of the people who worked in the base were on the wall. A couple of them were bloodied and beaten. The other third was standing over them, pointing guns to make sure nobody tried to stand up.

"What happened?" Eleven whispered to Agent Read who was sitting next to her.

"They all got us by surprise. About two minutes after you left, they all stood up from their desks and forced us to the walls. Some of us tried to resist but none succeeded."

"Who are they?"

"We don't know." Eleven closely examined the situation. While most of the rogue agents were patrolling those on the wall, one was off at one of the desks on the phone. His name was Agent Bretts. Or at least it was. Eleven had no idea who these people were anymore. He was apparently in charge.

"Hey!" Eleven called to one of the patrolling agents. "Who are you?" A sly, victorious smile appeared on the former agent as he slowly made his way to Eleven, finger on the trigger of his gun the whole time.

"We're The Legion," he said. Eleven's heart fell. She always knew that The Legion was never completely gone, but she didn't know that they still had this much power. "With the Demogorgon gone, the only thing that might be able to stop us is The Coalition, but we're about to take care of that once and for all."

"Nine and Ten... They're in charge. Aren't they?... How did they get out?"

"They were never really trapped," Bretts spoke up from his desk at the back of the room. He slowly started walking over to Eleven. "Most of their guards were Legion members anyway. Now, we're just waiting

on orders from them as to what we should do with you."

Eleven looked at everything in the room once again and her brain went into overdrive trying to find a way out. Her hands were cuffed and her powers were neutralized, so most of her possible solutions were deemed impossible almost immediately. Eleven shot down each and every idea she came up. None of them had any chance of working. If she tried to do anything, there was a good chance that the Legion members would shoot.

"What's your idea?" asked Agent Read quietly.

"I don't have one," Eleven said back.

"I know you. You always have an idea."

"Sorry, John. Not this time."

The lights in Eleven's office suddenly came on. The first person to notice it was Eleven herself, but the second was Bretts.

"Go see what that is," he ordered one of the other Legion members. That man marched over to the office.

"Who's there?" he called into the office. He began pointing his gun around the small room, looking for someone that might have evaded them the first time around. The lights in the office got brighter and brighter. Then the lights in the main office started flickering. All of a sudden, the lights in the office went off. The man sent into Eleven's office screamed, but was cut off by something. When the lights came back on, he was gone.

Two more of the Legion members walked over to Eleven's office, but more slowly. One of them was visibly shaking trying to aim his gun at the room. They had no idea what was going on, but Eleven did.

"You need to get this collar off of me," Eleven said to the Legion member still standing over her and Read.

"Why would I do that?"

"If you don't, we're all going to die."

"If I do let you out, only we're going to die." He made a motion with his hand to indicate the other Legion members in the room. "I think I'm going to take my chances."

The lights started flickering again. There was a scream from the other side of the room, and another Legion member had disappeared. Two more screams. Two more missing men. Bretts picked a pistol up off his desk and began walking backwards. He backed straight into a corner and nervously pointed the gun around the room, but it was hard to focus on anything with the lights going crazy. Bretts fell backwards through the wall and was gone. The only Legion member that remained was the one guarding Eleven and Read.

"Do you believe me now?" asked Eleven. "Let me out!" The guard began to quickly fumble around with a ring of keys, looking for the right one to unlock Eleven with. He stopped when the room went completely dark. There was a small amount of light floating in from the streets below. It was just enough to see the giant silhouette rising behind the guard. A low rumble air permeated the air as the shaking guard slowly turned around. He felt the moist breath of the creature on his sweating face. The lights flashed on brightly as the creature pounced, then it was gone and everything seemed to turn back to normal. Most of the remaining Coalition agents were shaking, scared out of their pants. Eleven included. In fact, Eleven might have been more scared than the others because she actually knew what had just happened whereas the others had no idea. Nonetheless, Eleven allowed herself to take a deep breath in a vain attempt to calm herself down. The storm had passed... for now.

"What was that?" asked Read. Eleven didn't get a good look at it, but she knew exactly what it was. She was a little too shaken up by it to say much, but she did manage to get one word out;

"Demogorgon." The beast that had caused her so much trouble in the past appeared to have just saved her life.

A/N: So yeah, a lot of stuff just happened there. I have decided to slow down posting to once a week for about the next month so I don't get completely stressed out with this story on top of all the other stuff that's going on. Please write a review to let me know what you think

and how the story should proceed, this is after all a big turning point.

10. Chapter 10: The Plans

The Coalition had begun to clean up and put all their other bases on high alert. Most of the computers were destroyed, but Agent Read was able to find one that he could get working.

"A notification just came in through the Coalition intranet," Read said, frowning down at the computer screen.

"What is it?" asked Eleven.

"Nine and Ten's collars were disabled seven minutes ago. They're free." Eleven's worst fears had been confirmed. It felt like her whole world was falling apart. She knew that the rest of the agents must have been feeling similarly. Even though they had never met Nine and Ten, they had certainly heard the stories. They knew what this attack meant. Eleven saw their spirits fall, but this wasn't the end. Eleven very quickly made a few big decisions.

"Yes, I know everything looks bad," Eleven announced to the rest of the agents. "But we can and will fight this." A couple agents started nodding. "I've put the other Coalition bases on high alert. We will be working with them, but after the events of today, the only agents I know I can trust are in this room. That's going to mean more work on your part, but it's necessary."

"If I may, Director..." started one of the agents. "...I hope I speak for everyone when I say that we're ready to fight. We're ready to help." A general consensus came from the rest of the group.

"With that, I think it would be good if you all went home for now. You went through a lot tonight. Get some rest. We'll start back up tomorrow morning." Almost everyone started making their way towards the elevator except for Eleven and Read.

"I'm going to stay here tonight," Agent Read said. "I'll keep monitoring Coalition transmissions, see if any more problems come up."

"OK. Lock the doors when I get downstairs. Don't let anyone up until

we show up tomorrow morning."

"No problem." Eleven went into her office to get her things, and when she came back out, Read was on his phone.

"Who are you texting?" Eleven asked.

"My girlfriend. We had plans to go out to brunch tomorrow but this is more important."

"I didn't know you had a girlfriend."

"We just met two weeks ago, but things are going well so far."

"I'm happy for you, John." Read finished up his text.

"Thanks, Director." Read turned his attention back to the computer, and Eleven took a strange route to the elevator to avoid the mess on the floor from the attack.

It was three minutes past midnight when Mike saw the distinct image of headlights passing over the curtains at the front of the house. He was tired, but had forced himself to stay up until Eleven got home. He quickly got up off the couch, yawning as he did, and flew open the front door to see his wife.

"You certainly took your time coming home," he said, a loving smile on his face. He expected Eleven to respond in about the same way, but as she got out of the car, Mike could tell that something was wrong. He left the door and hurried over to Eleven. "What's wrong?" he asked.

"Something happened," Eleven said.

"What?" Eleven closed and locked the car.

"I need to go inside and relax a little bit first."

Ten minutes later, Eleven had eaten something and had been able to relax before telling the story of that night's events. Mike didn't interrupt her while she told it, but he was horrified.

"So Nine, Ten and the Demogorgon are back?" he asked when Eleven was done. All his she could do was nod. "What should we do?"

"I don't know." Eleven sat down on one of the bar stools next to the counter and just stared down at the marble surface.

"Well... are we safe? At least for now? I mean... it's probably going to take The Legion some time to recover after something like that."

"That's what we said thirty years ago when Mallory came to join us. One and the twins attacked us only a day or two after that. I don't want to make that mistake again."

"What about the kids? Are they safe?" Eleven looked up.

"I don't think anyone is safe. Least of all our kids. I don't know about Nine, but Ten would certainly be willing to tear through everyone to get to me. I think you and I are at least slightly prepared for it, but the kids aren't."

"Well then what should we do?"

"I have an idea."

"Why haven't we heard anything?" Ten asked. She was trying to stay calm, but her anger was bubbling to the surface.

"Try again," Nine told the Legion members working on a bank of computers that had been set up in what used to be Nine and Ten's prison. He was doing a better job of keeping his cool. Ten paced back and forth around the dimly lit room. She was glad to finally have her collar off, but she had been expecting the downfall of The Coalition and wasn't able to get any word of confirmation.

"A message just came through The Coalition's network," one of the people on computers announced.

"What is it?" Ten demanded impatiently.

"It's a short message that The Legion is back and attacked Chicago, and a warning to the rest of the bases. It says that more details will

be delivered in paper in the interest of security." Ten gritted her teeth.

"We failed?" she asked.

"Unfortunately, it looks that way." Ten slowly drew in a breath of air, then let out the loudest scream she ever had. All of the computer monitors shattered and sparks flew from every other piece of electrical equipment.

"You!" Ten yelled, pointing at one of the higher ranking Legion members in the room. The man shakily got up and walked over to Ten. "I want you to find everything you can about 'Elle Byers-Wheeler'. I want to know everyone she has ever talked to in the last thirty years." Ten started to walk away before the other man spoke up.

"Mam, wouldn't that be distracting from our main goal? We already know enough about The Coalition to neutralize them. With all due respect, your desire for revenge is... unimportant." Ten stopped and turned around. She didn't say anything at first, but the man who had talked back to her flew back and hit the hard concrete wall.

"Unimportant?" Ten screamed, walking over to the almost unconscious man. "I decide what is important, not you. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, mam," the man said. Ten didn't say anything else. She pushed past her brother and left the room, slamming the door on her way out.

3AM is either too early or too late for almost everything. However, at 3AM that night, when there was still no sign of the sun, a meeting was held in the Wheelers' house. Mike and Eleven were there, as well as Dustin, Amy, Nancy and Steve.

"We're all here, El. Can you please tell us why you woke everyone up?" an extremely tired Dustin asked. As if to punctuate that, he yawned immediately after saying it.

"The Legion attacked us at work tonight," Eleven said very plainly.

That did a pretty good job of waking everyone up.

"How did you get out?" asked Steve. Even though he wasn't a big part of things the first time The Legion caused problems for them, he knew what happened and how dangerous they were.

"The Demogorgon showed up but only attacked Legion members for some reason." Everyone, even the ones who had heard the story before, was in shock.

"Why did you call us here?" asked Nancy. "I mean... why just us? Why not everyone?"

"I'm going to tell everyone that could be involved with this. Right now though, we know The Legion is dangerous and the ones in most danger are our kids."

"What are you suggesting?" asked Dustin. "24 hour Coalition bodyguards for them?"

"El and I have been talking..." Mike started. "...and we have decided that we're sending Joyce and James to Hawkins to go live with their grandmother."

"The Coalition is going to be setting up security around the town while they're there and we'd like to say that your kids would be safe there if you want," Eleven said.

"Would we be able to go there with them?" Amy asked.

"It would be safer if we didn't," Eleven said. "We're doing our best to keep Joyce and James's location a secret."

"Keep in mind that your kids wouldn't be entirely alone. At least they would have Joyce and James," Mike said. The rest of the parents sat and thought for a minute.

"When would we need to make a decision by?" asked Nancy.

"I already called my mom," Eleven said. "At about 8 this morning, we're going to tell the kids to pack then Mike is driving them down to Hawkins immediately. But we'd be willing to wait a couple of hours

so we could all drive down together should you decide to do so as well." Nobody said anything after that, so Eleven just continued. "I know that this is very big and very sudden, but I really think this is the right decision."

Joyce had forgotten to close her curtains that night, so as soon as the sun rose, the light was shining in her eyes. This immediately woke her up. The clock next to her bed said it was only a little after seven. Joyce didn't feel like getting up and closing the curtains, so she just rolled over and tried to get back to sleep. She had barely closed her eyes when she heard a knock at the door.

"Joyce, are you awake?" she heard her dad's voice ask.

"Dad, it's Saturday," Joyce groaned.

"I know, but this is important." Joyce reluctantly pushed off the covers, got up and opened the door for Mike.

"What is it?" she asked, still half asleep.

"Pack your clothes and anything else you want, you and James are going to Hawkins." That woke Joyce up a little.

"What? Why?"

"I'll explain later. But for now, just pack your bags."

"OK. Is it just for the weekend?"

"No, pack as much as you can fit."

"What's happening? I'm getting worried."

"Just pack your bags," was all Mike said. He stayed in Joyce's room while she packed the two suitcases she had with all the clothes she could fit. Then, she got all her school supplies out of her backpack. She packed her laptop, and when Mike wasn't looking, she pulled his old radio out from under her bed and packed that too. Once she was done, she picked up her phone and started writing a text.

"What are you doing?" Mike asked.

"I had plans with Julie today. I was just going to let her know that I can't make it," Joyce said. Mike swiftly pulled Joyce's phone out of her hand and powered it down. "What are you doing?"

"You can't let anyone know where you're going. I'm going to change your SIM card too." Mike looked Joyce in the eye. "Do not tell anybody where you are going. Understood?"

"I still don't know what's going on."

"Unfortunately, it's going to have to stay that way for a little while. But are we understood that you will not tell anybody where you are going?"

"Yes."

"Good."

Five minutes later, they met James and Eleven at the front door. They quickly said goodbye to Eleven, who had to go to work, then walked out to the car.

"We're going to have to drop down the back seats to fit everything," Mike said.

"The trunk's big enough for this stuff," Joyce said.

"We're picking up some more people on the way." Joyce was curious as to who else was coming with, but given her dad's demeanor that morning, she wasn't too enthusiastic to ask.

Joyce got the first of her answers a couple of minutes later when they pulled up to Nancy and Steve's house. Barb walked out with Nancy. She seemed a little shaken up. She put her suitcase in the trunk, gave her mom a hug, then got in and sat down next to Joyce. Mike drove off again in silence.

"Do you know what's happening?" Barb asked quietly.

"All I know is that we're driving to Hawkins. Other than that, no

idea."

"Barb, could you please completely power down your phone?" Mike asked. Barb did without asking any questions.

A couple minutes later, they were in the Hendersons' driveway where Dustin and his kids were packing the car.

"Hey," Mike said, getting out and walking up to Dustin.

"Hey," Dustin said back. "We're almost ready to go."

"OK. Have your kids power down their phones completely. And do yours for that matter too. Once we leave, follow my car the whole way. Don't even stop for the bathroom without me."

"You seem to know what you're doing."

"I haven't been a secret agent in years, but I still know how it works." Mike said that last bit quietly so only Dustin could hear it.

Eleven arrived at work a couple minutes before 9 AM. Most of the rest of the agents were already there. Most were already at their desks doing some work, a couple others were cleaning up some of the mess from the attack the previous night.

"So many of you are here already," Eleven remarked out loud. "I thought most of you would take some time to rest." Agent Read walked up with the ever-present morning briefing in hand.

"Like we said, Director. We're ready to fight. A couple people called in and said that they are coming in a little late, but that we shouldn't worry about them." Eleven took the briefing from Read.

"I trust them to get here. It's absolutely no problem that they need to take some time." Read nodded in agreement.

"We've begun to look for Nine and Ten. A team from Hawaii was sent to their prison. It looks like they were using it as a base for the last couple of weeks to keep the alarms on their collars from going off too early."

"Were they still there?" asked Eleven.

"No. The team found the computers that were used to communicate with the Legion members that attacked us, but it looked like they got out pretty soon after the attack failed."

"What have you found out so far?"

"They got out on a private plane, but then disappeared. We're still looking." Eleven went through her head to think of what else they needed to do.

"Have a team try and find other Legion members within The Coalition. I think I can trust everyone here, but I'd like that circle to be bigger."

"Yes, Director." Read turned to left, but then Eleven called him back;

"Just one more thing."

"What's that?"

"The Demogorgon appearing. Could you have someone look into that? I have a bad feeling that all of this might involve more than just The Legion."

A/N: I hope everyone enjoys this. Again, I'm updating once a week now so the next update will be next Saturday. I'm going to be in England then, but I'll make sure to get it up. Please leave a review!

11. Chapter 11: Hawkins

The drive down to Hawkins was stressful for everyone. It was stressful for the kids because they didn't know what was happening and it was stressful for the adults because they did. Or at least, they had an idea of the danger at hand. It wasn't until they actually got into the city of Hawkins that the two cars split up. Dustin drove to his parents' house to drop off Alice, Edward and Hunter. Mike first drove to his parents' house even though only Barb would be staying there. His mom had continued to live there after his dad had died a year previously.

As soon as he pulled into the driveway, his mom opened the door and walked out to greet them.

"Mike!" she called. "How was the drive?" she asked while giving her son a hug.

"Good. Pretty quiet."

"Grandma!" James yelled, jumping out of the car. He gave his grandmother a hug too, followed by Joyce, then Barb.

"James and Joyce, could you actually get back in the car?" Mike asked nicely. "We're just dropping Barb off here. You two are going to be staying with Grandma Joyce but don't worry, you'll still have plenty of time to see Grandma Karen." The two kids agreed, said goodbye to Karen, then got back into the car. Barb took out her suitcase, then walked into the big house to get situated. "I should probably go drop off James and Joyce. I still want to get back to Chicago by tonight."

"Mike, wait," Karen called as Mike started to leave. "You know that I'm glad to help you and Nancy with whatever you need, but I want to know something. All this witness-protection seeming stuff is scaring me." Mike knew his mother was right. She deserved to know something.

"Remember all that weird stuff we did when we were kids?" Mike asked, purposely trying to be a little vague.

"You're going to have to be at least a little more specific than that."

"When we would do a lot of stuff with Dr. Carter and we kept secrets from you."

"OK. I remember a little bit about that."

"Some bad things were happening back then. They're happening again, but in Chicago. El and I are just trying to keep the kids safe from it." Karen nodded. "I really wish I could tell you more, but this is just such a touchy subject."

"But everything is going well between you and Elle?"

"Yes. You don't have anything to worry about there."

By noon, operations at The Coalition's headquarters were in full swing.

"Did you look into IPI's possible connections to The Legion?" Eleven asked Read.

"We're still trying to find something, but other than that attack by the vigilante twenty years ago, we've got nothing." Eleven flipped back through all the pages she had on the IPI investigation. She had carefully read every single one of them and hoped that skimming through them one more time would help with something.

"What if they aren't connected?" she asked. Read looked up from what he was reading. He had never considered that possibility.

"What makes you say that?" he asked.

"The only reason The Legion was interested in the Upside-Down in the first place was because they wanted to get One back. Now, as far as we know, he's long dead. Why would they have any reason to open that gate?"

"I don't know. I'm sure there's some reason. We still don't know the possibilities the Upside-Down could offer."

"Yeah. I guess you're right. It was only a hypothesis." Eleven's cell phone started ringing.

"Go ahead and take that," Read said. "It's probably going to be a while before I have anything new." Eleven answered the call.

"Hello?" she said.

"Could I please speak to Elle Byers-Wheeler?" asked a woman on the other end of the line.

"This is she," Eleven said.

"My name is Sharon Ellis. I'm a nurse at Chicago All-Saints Hospital calling on behalf of Mallory Brenner."

"Oh!" Eleven exclaimed. "Is she OK? Did something happen?"

"Miss Brenner was admitted about an hour ago with flu-like symptoms that have worsened since then. It doesn't look good for her and she asked us to call you."

"I'm on my way." Eleven hung up the phone and started packing a few essential things in her purse. "I need to go," she told Read. "You're in charge while I'm gone. Keep me updated on anything that happens."

"It's so nice to see all of you," Joyce Byers said.

"We're happy to be here, Grandma," James said. The younger Joyce nodded in agreement.

"Why don't you two go unpack?" Joyce asked the kids. "I'm going to talk to your dad for a little while." The kids got their suitcases, then went into their respective rooms to get situated.

"What is it you wanted to talk about?" Mike asked.

"Last time bad stuff was happening, you kept almost all of it from me. I'm not angry about it, but that can't happen this time. Apparently Joyce and James don't know anything, but somebody should." Mike

sighed and got ready to tell the whole story.

"You know where El works, right?"

"Of course."

"Their headquarters in Chicago was attacked by The Legion yesterday and they were somehow saved by the Demogorgon." Joyce's eyes went wide. There was a lot of information that she needed to process contained in that one sentence. Mike could tell that Joyce wasn't about to say anything, so he continued. "We just want to keep the kids out of any danger. We realize that that's hard, but we think that this is a start."

"The Demogorgon is back?" Joyce asked. Mike slowly nodded. "How?"

"We don't know. We're still trying to figure that out. But that's why we're leaving the kids with you. You're strong. You can help them." Mike looked at his watch. "I have to go. Take this." Mike pulled a simple cell phone out of his pocket and handed it to his mother-in-law. "It's encrypted by The Coalition. I'll keep you updated with it but nobody will be able to track it. I switched out the SIM cards in James and Joyce's phones at a rest stop during the trip." Mike walked down the hall to the two rooms that James and Joyce were staying in.

"Do you have to leave, dad?" Joyce asked.

"Yes. I have to get back to your mother," Mike said. James ran up and gave Mike a hug.

"When will you be back?" he asked.

"I don't know at this point." Mike stood up. Said goodbye one more time, then left.

Eleven ran in the door of the hospital and up to the nurses' station.

"I'm looking for Mallory Brenner," she said to the first nurse that came up to her.

"Down the hall. Third door to the right," the nurse said.

"Thank you!" Eleven called as she ran off. It was a very plain white room. Other than all the medical equipment, there was just a small table and two chairs. A doctor in blue scrubs was standing over the bed, writing something on the chart. He turned around when he heard Eleven come in.

"You must be Mrs. Wheeler," the doctor said.

"I am," said Eleven. "How is she?"

"Honestly, it doesn't look too good for her." Eleven approached the bed and saw Mallory asleep on it. Her skin was pale, and it glistened with cold sweat. Her breathing looked stressed. The doctor leaned down next to Mallory and whispered; "Miss Brenner, your friend is here." Mallory's eyes slowly fluttered open and her eyes turned to look at Eleven. "I'll leave you two alone for a moment," the doctor said, leaving the room. Eleven pulled over one of the chairs and sat down next to the bed.

"How are you doing?" she asked. The question seemed pretty routine, but Eleven thought it would be a good place to start. Mallory coughed.

"Certainly not good," she said. "The doctors tell me I might not make it out of this."

"Don't talk like that. You know you're going to live for ever." Eleven smiled. Mallory laughed a little bit, which only caused her to cough more.

"I need to thank you, Eleven." It was very rare that Eleven heard her real name anymore.

"Why?"

"You were the only person that was able to forgive me. And you're really the only friend I have."

"The only one?"

"Well all my friends from before the fall of The Legion were either dead or evil, and my entire life before that didn't really make it easy

for me to meet people. I kept myself occupied, but I never really had a friend like you. And I need to thank you for that." Mallory raised an oxygen mask to her face and took a breath. "I just have a few things I want to ask."

"Go ahead. Anything."

"Nine and Ten... did you go talk to them." Eleven stopped smiling.

"Yes."

"What did they tell you?" Eleven thought long and hard about what she should say as to the outcome of that dreaded meeting.

"They told me that they had nothing to do with whatever I was feeling, and that the Demogorgon might not be the only threat from the Upside-Down."

"And then what happened to Nine and Ten?" Eleven hesitated to answer. "I still hear rumors, but I need to hear it from you."

"Is that what you really want to hear about right now?"

"I want to hear the truth. I'm old, not a child." Eleven sighed.

"Nine and Ten escaped about a day ago, and The Coalition was attacked by The Legion under their order." Mallory nodded slowly.

"As much as I would like to help you, I can't. All my connections within The Legion are far outdated. But I will tell you one thing." Eleven listened closely. "You can't send them back to prison. Nine and Ten are too dangerous to be out there. Even if it isn't 'proper procedure', you need to end them once and for all." A single tear formed in Eleven's eye. She knew Mallory was right. "You need to end them," Mallory repeated. "End them..." she said before trailing off. Her head rolled off to the side and a long drone came out of the heart monitor next to her. Eleven grabbed Mallory's hand and panicked.

"Mallory," she said, shaking Mallory's hand to try and wake her up. "Doctor!" she screamed. The doctor in the blue scrubs ran back in. A couple of nurses ran in too.

"I'm sorry, but you need to stand outside," one of the nurses told Eleven. It took a moment for Eleven to register what the nurse said, but then she went outside the door. She wasn't looking out and narrowly missed being run over by the crash cart being wheeled into the room. Eleven stood just outside the doorway, looking in as the doctor spread gel on the defibrillator paddles.

"Clear!" he called. Mallory's body jumped around as the shock hit her. "I'm trying again, clear!" She took another shock, but there was no difference. The last thing that Eleven heard coming from the room was the doctor saying; "Time of death: 1:22 PM."

The sun was only beginning to set when Mike arrived back at home. He was expecting the whole house to be empty, so he was a little surprised when he saw Eleven sitting in the corner of the couch.

"I thought you would still be here at work," Mike said.

"Me too," Eleven said quietly. Mike put his bag down in the hallway then sat down next to Eleven.

"Did something happen?" Mike asked.

"Mallory Brenner died today." Mike fell silent. Even though he knew how much his wife cared about Mallory and how much she had changed, he had always had mixed feelings. He couldn't forget the time she kidnapped Eleven and Will to get One out of the Upside-Down. "The funeral is on Tuesday." Eleven looked up at Mike. "Not many people are coming. I know what you thought about her, but I would really appreciate it if you would come." Mike hugged Eleven tight.

"Of course."

A/N: I am currently in England and will only have about two days at home after this trip before moving back to America. There is a chance that even posting one chapter a week, I will still fall behind. That being said, the next chapter will be posted next Saturday, right after I get back to America. Please enjoy and write a review (I need

some ideas for small things to keep the story going).

12. Chapter 12: The Funeral

James and Joyce were a little surprised on Sunday night when their grandmother told them that they were already registered to go to school in Hawkins the next day.

"Your dad took care of all of it," she had said. So, early Monday morning, James and Joyce woke up, ate breakfast, packed the minimal school supplies they had with, then got in their grandmother's car. The first stop was at the high school, where Joyce got out. It took her a while to find her first class, English, but she eventually did and walked in. She looked around and was happy to see a familiar face.

"I'm glad I know someone here," she said, walking over to Barb, who had found a desk right at the front of the room.

"Yeah, that helps," Barb said. It was obvious that he was thinking of something else. "Do you know why we're here?"

"Like... in this English class, or Hawkins in general?"

"Hawkins in general."

"No idea. My dad just told us to pack and get in the car."

"That's pretty much how it happened with me. I thought your dad might have told you more before you picked me up."

"I have this feeling that something's wrong."

"Like what?" Barb had a similar feeling, but he couldn't quite figure it out.

"I don't know. But I still feel like something is *really* wrong."

The bell rang and the teacher walked in. She was an older woman, but not that old. Joyce thought she must have been a couple years younger than her grandmother. She also looked ever so slightly familiar, almost as if Joyce had seen her before in a long forgotten dream.

"We have two new students in our class today," the teacher said. She opened her bag and pulled out a piece of paper. After putting on her glasses, she read off of it. "Everyone, please welcome Barbra Harrington and Joyce Wheeler." The teacher's voice seemed to shake a little bit when reading off the names. Once she was done, her eyes lingered on the page before turning to the girls and forcing out a smile. "I'm Mrs. Carter."

Mike parked the car at the cemetery and turned off the engine. He turned to Eleven in the passenger seat.

"Are you ready?" he asked. Eleven looked down and shook her head. "Would you just like a little time?" Eleven nodded. Mike got out of the car. Two more cars pulled into the parking lot and Dustin, Amy, Lucas, Sarah and Lucas got out. "Thanks for coming, guys. El really appreciates it."

"I never knew what to think of Brenner," Lucas said. "But if El liked her, that's good enough for me."

The funeral was small. It was only the seven of them and a priest who apparently never knew Mallory. Once the service was done, the priest left the group to pay their respects. Amy came up to Eleven and put her hand on her shoulder.

"She was an old woman," Amy said. "She lived a full life." Eleven slowly shook her head.

"No she didn't," she said. Mike was confused.

"What do you mean?"

"She didn't leave a full life." Everyone waited for Eleven to explain further. "She was old, so there was no reason for the hospital to do a thorough autopsy. But I had The Coalition do one. They found a cocktail of hard-to-detect poisons."

"Who would do that?" Lucas asked, even though everyone knew the answer.

"Nine and Ten. Without Mallory, we probably wouldn't have been

able to stop them. But she couldn't hurt them anymore, though. They didn't need to kill her. They just wanted cold revenge."

"Well then... what do we do?" asked Sarah.

"I think we're safe for now. It's easier to poison a specific dish in a nursing home than the food we buy at the grocery store, so I don't think we have to worry about that. But I would be careful about eating at restaurants."

"My boyfriend was going to take me out this Friday," Sarah said. "Should I ask him to cancel?"

"I really don't think we can be too safe." The whole group was slowly reaching the realization as to how different their lives would be until Nine and Ten were dealt with.

Chemistry class at Hawkins High School was one of the only classes that combined grade levels, meaning that Edward was in a class with Joyce and Barb.

"Does this teacher sound familiar?" Edward asked as he sat down next to Joyce and Barb. He took out his school schedule and pointed to the last class before lunch: chemistry with Dr. Carter.

"Did our parents have him?" Joyce asked.

"I guess so."

The bell rang, the teacher walked in and the door closed.

"Good morning, everyone," Dr. Carter said. He froze in his steps when he saw Joyce, Edward and Barb sitting in the first row of the class. It took him a minute to drop it, but then he was able to continue teaching. To the three new students, Dr. Carter's teaching style seemed a little strange. To everyone else, it was much different than usual. He seemed very distracted. Maybe a little worried.

He seemed a little startled when the bell ringed, everyone packed up their things and left for lunch as Carter struggled to remember the homework he wanted to assign.

"Joyce, Edward and Barbara, could you three stay behind for a short moment?" Carter asked. They set down their backpacks and waited for everyone else to leave the room. Behind the last person, Carter carefully closed the door and turned to the three kids that stayed. "What are you three doing here?" he asked suddenly.

"What?" asked Joyce.

"I'm sorry, you probably want some context. I know your parents, I was their teacher. I'm still their friend. I saw all of you when you were little."

"And you want to know why we're in Hawkins and not Chicago?" asked Edward.

"If we're getting straight to the point, yes. Sorry if that seems a little strange."

"It certainly wouldn't be the strangest thing to happen to us in the past couple of days," Barb said.

"To be entirely honest, we have no idea," Joyce said. "My parents just told me to pack up then my dad dropped me in Hawkins. They seemed... scared of something." Carter milled around behind his desk for a while. If he wasn't scared too, he was at least uncomfortable for some reason.

"That's all I wanted to ask," Carter said quietly. "Have fun at lunch."

The cafeteria was pretty much full by the time Joyce, Barb and Edward got there. The up-side was that there was almost no line to get their food. The downside was that after they got their food, there was nowhere to sit. They made almost two complete laps of the cafeteria before hearing;

"If you guys are looking for a place to sit, you're welcome here." Joyce turned to see who said that. It was a small, brown haired girl sitting on the corner of one of the tables. There were some people near her, but they were all engaged in a conversation that didn't seem to involve her.

"Thanks," Joyce said, sitting down then sliding along the bench a little bit to allow Edward to sit next to her. The girl that invited them over slid down as well so Barb could sit next to her.

"I'm Mary, by the way," the girl said. "You guys are new, right? We had chemistry together last period."

"Yeah, we did," Barb said, suddenly remembering Mary. She had sat a row or two behind them.

"I'll say that Dr. Carter is usually an awesome teacher. Today was a little weird," Mary said. "And... I am so sorry, but what are your names again? I forgot."

"That's OK," Edward replied. "I'm Edward, this is Joyce, and that's Barb."

"Barb like Barbara?" asked Mary.

"Um... yes," Barb replied. "Why?"

"It's just that... Barbara is kind of a famous name around here." Mary began speaking with her best ghost-story voice. "About thirty years ago, there was a girl named Barbra that went to this very school. She went to a party one night, then mysteriously disappeared. Never to be seen again." Barb nodded a little bit. In the first grade, everybody got an assignment to ask their parents where their name came from. When Barb asked her mother, she heard that exact same story, but with a little more sadness. "But of course, that's only the second most famous story in this town," Mary continued. "The most well known is the story of Will Byers: the boy who came back to life." Joyce could tell that Mary was having fun introducing the group to all the strange happening of Hawkins in the past, but she interrupted her anyway.

"We know that story," said Joyce. "He's my uncle." Mary's mouth fell open.

"Really? What's he like?"

"I've never met him. Nobody's seen him since a couple months before I was born."

"Oh... I'm sorry."

"Don't be. It's not your fault. Plus, can't miss someone if you don't know them." Joyce said that when people asked about her uncle even though she knew it wasn't true. Despite never having met Will, she still missed him very much.

"But that would make you either Elle or Jonathan Byers' daughter. Right?" Mary asked.

"Elle Wheeler," Joyce corrected.

"She married Mike?" Mary asked. It was beginning to get weird, how much Mary already seemed to know about Joyce's family. "My mom told me that everyone in the school expected them to get married." It got a little less weird when Joyce learned that Mary's mom knew her parents in high school.

"Why do you know so much about Joyce's family?" Edward asked.

"I've lived here my whole life. My parents have lived here their whole lives. Not too much has happened around here since Will Byers disappeared and the couple years of strangeness that followed."

"What do you mean 'couple years of strangeness that followed'?" Joyce asked. She knew most of the story from when her uncle disappeared, but hadn't heard of anything that happened after that.

"I don't know. I wasn't around then. If you really want to know, you'd have to ask my mom," Mary said, taking a bite of a french fry.

The phone on Eleven's desk started ringing promptly at 6PM that afternoon, which was strange. Very few people had that number, and most of the ones that did usually just called Eleven on her cell phone. She tried to think for a moment who could be calling, but when nothing came up, she just picked up the phone.

"Hello?" she asked. She tried to sound powerful to whoever might be on the other end, but some of her uncertainty showed through.

"El? It's Peter Carter," Carter said from the other end of the line.

Eleven felt relieved, it turned out she didn't have to be scared.

"Hi!" Called another, very familiar voice through the phone. "It's Elizabeth. I'm here too."

"Hi, guys. To what do I owe the pleasure?" Eleven asked.

"Unfortunately, I don't think it's going to be all that pleasurable," Carter said. Eleven was beginning to get an idea of what her old teachers and mentors were calling about. "Why are Joyce, Barb and Edward in Hawkins? And I think I saw Alice here too." Eleven sighed. She really should have warned the Carters beforehand.

"That's not all. Hunter and Edward are there too."

"Yes, but why?" asked Elizabeth.

"Nine and Ten escaped from prison." Eleven gave that last sentence a moment to set in with Carter and Elizabeth. "The Legion is back on the rise. They very nearly overthrew The Coalition on Friday. We moved the kids to Hawkins in secret to try and protect them." Eleven thought really hard about whether or not she should say the next bit of information. In the end, she remembered all the things that the Carters already knew about and decided that the more they knew, the more effectively they might be able to help. "Also... the Demogorgon isn't dead." There was a moment of dead silence on the phone.

"What?" asked Carter. "What did it do to you?"

"I don't know. I think... it might have saved my life."

"Why would it do that?"

"I don't know. But when The Legion was taking over The Coalition, it showed up and got rid of all the Legion members."

"I haven't been in this for a while, but I don't think it was trying to save you. I think it was attracted by you as well as all the blood I'm assuming was there..." Carter was right, there was a lot of blood left over from the struggle by the time Eleven got there. "...I really think you just got lucky that it didn't go after you."

"Every other time I've seen the Demogorgon, it's just brutally gone after everything in its path. This wasn't anything like that. It wasn't random either. It was... careful. Selective."

"All I'm saying is that I would be careful. I wouldn't just start to think that the Demogorgon is somehow your ally."

A/N: If everything goes right, this should be uploaded right after I move back to America. My schedule remains very very busy so expect my uploads to become a little inconsistent. Thanks, everyone for reading and please leave a review! I really appreciate anything and everything you have to say.

13. Chapter 13: The Gate

Mary was able to somewhat elegantly shove herself into Joyce, Barb and Edward's group of friends. Even though the three of them were familiar with Hawkins because of their various trips down there to visit family, they didn't know many of the little fun places. But of course, Mary was more than happy to show them around. What became their favorite place around town was the little diner in the town square. The food was surprisingly good for surprisingly low prices.

"James is out with friends today," Joyce mentioned out one weekend in early December. She, Barb, Edward and Mary were sitting at the diner.

"That's good," Barb said. She knew James his whole life. It sometimes took him long to make friends, but when he did, he had some really good friends. "Alice managed to find some friends pretty fast too," Barb added. Edward took a bite of his burger before answering;

"Yeah, it seems like she's always out with them. I haven't really talked to her in a while."

"The weird thing is that a couple of her friends hated each other before she got here," Mary said. "Tommy G. and Matt Bones actually got into a bunch of fistfights with each other, but apparently they're friends ever since Alice got here. Edward, I think your sister is some kind of great peace maker."

"That's not what I would have called her a little while ago."

"It's probably just because she's your sister."

"No, it's not that. She's always been nice, but not this nice. And despite all of that, it just feels like she's getting more and more distant from me."

"Well at least you have us," Joyce said in a happy, somewhat sarcastic tone. Edward cracked a smile and laughed a little.

Eleven stood in a hazmat suit, staring into the gate under the IPI skyscraper. Research on it in the past two weeks had turned up nothing except a bunch of broken equipment. The one thing they had managed to do was develop a system for shielding electronics against the Upside-Down. After that break-through, it only took a couple of days for them to build a small rover to send in.

"Everything is ready when you are," Agent Read said through his hazmat suit. Eleven took a deep breath to try and calm herself down while staring into the gate. "You know, you don't have to be here if you don't want to. I can't imagine how difficult this must be for you."

"I'm fine. Let's get to work." Eleven gave the signal for everyone to start getting everything ready. One of the agents made final preparations on the rover. Another one clipped the whole thing to a big winch, unaware that that was exactly what Dr. Brenner and his team had done more than thirty years previously.

The 'all-clear' was given and the rover was driven slowly towards the pulsating gate. It met some resistance as it pushed through the slimy barrier, but made it through. Once it was out of sight, Eleven pulled her attention away from the gate and over to a screen monitoring the feed from the cameras. Only static was coming through for a while as the rover pushed through the gate and on towards the Upside-Down. After a moment, the static receded and revealed a completely different Upside-Down than the one Eleven had known thirty years earlier.

Everything was still there. The ground was still covered in unearthly vines and the world was eerily empty, but then there was the sky.

"I thought you said the Upside-Down was dark," Agent Read said.

"It was," Eleven replied in shock. "Something's changed." She just kept staring at the monitors and at the bright red sky they revealed.

"How did Nine and Ten do this?"

"I'm not sure they did." Eleven looked up from the monitors and towards the pulsating crack in the wall, hoping it might show her some answers.

Just a moment later, a black spot appeared on the side of the gate. One of the vines that were a common sight in the Upside-Down poked out and wriggled its way into the room. A scientist curiously but cautiously approached the vine and started waving some measurement tools at it.

"Don't get near it!" Eleven called. The scientist ignored her.

The vine neared the scientist's face and sat there for a moment, like a snake sniffing its prey. The scientist froze. Then suddenly, the vine wound back and ran the scientist straight through the chest. He went limp and the vine lifted him up, the pulled him through the gate.

Nobody said anything, they just stared at the strange crack that killed and stole their coworker. They didn't have much time to mourn. At least eight more vines started slithering out of the gate.

"Evacuate!" screamed Eleven. She used her powers to push the vines up against the wall, but they grew stronger and started fighting back. Everyone in the room dropped everything and rushed towards the door. Eleven and Read stayed at the door when they were through, ready to slam them once everyone was through. But not everyone made it. At least two more scientists and agents were picked off by the vines. The last ones still running made it through. Read slammed his door and Eleven tried to slam hers but it wouldn't close all the way. One of the vines made it in between the door and the frame. Eleven pushed as hard as she could to keep it from coming further, but it was beginning to overpower her. A shot rang out through the hall. Eleven looked up to see Agent Read having just shot the vine. It reeled back through the door and Eleven was able to lock it before following the rest of the survivors to the elevator.

Despite the fact that her father was a chemistry teacher, Joyce had never been the best at the subject. Neither was Edward, but Barb was. That was why they all found themselves in Barb's room at the Wheeler home one night with the floor covered in chemistry homework the night before a big test.

"Why does Carter give so much homework?" asked Edward, yawning in between homework problems.

"It's not actually that much once you get it," said Barb. "But it does start to repeat after a while."

"Well Joyce and I don't get it."

"I'm starting to," Joyce said.

"What? I'm the only stupid one left?" Joyce and Barb laughed. Edward closed his book. "Well despite that, I'm taking a break."

"I might as well too," Barb said. She didn't close her book, instead setting it down still open to the page they were working on. "Joyce?" Joyce didn't say anything. "Joyce!" Barb called again, louder.

"What?" Joyce asked.

"Everything OK?"

"Yeah... no."

"What is it?"

"Remember a little while ago when Mary mentioned all the weird stuff that happened here when our parents were kids?"

"Yeah, what about it?" Joyce pulled her backpack over to herself and started fishing through it.

"I've been looking into the 'weird stuff' and I think I actually found something."

"What?" Joyce pulled some printouts out of her backpack and showed them to Barb.

"First, there's the 'Boy Who Came Back to Life' story about Uncle Will that we all know."

"I wouldn't necessarily start jumping to conclusions just with that."

"Yeah, but there's more," Joyce said, flipping to another page. "A year and a half later, there's this story: 'SWAT Teams Come to Hawkins High'. They said it was a false alarm, but multiple SWAT teams still seem like a lot for a tiny public high school."

"OK, so there's maybe something," Joyce didn't slow down to acknowledge Barb.

"Then a year later, more SWAT teams showed up and the middle school was roped off for no apparent reason. In between all this, there are just some small stories of people seeing weird things around town. Strange things happening to the electricity."

"I hate to play devil's advocate," Barb started. "But tons of small towns invent ghost stories to get people to visit them."

"Yeah, but it doesn't seem like that."

"Edward, what do you make of all this?" Edward had been strangely quiet for the entire conversation.

"What?" he asked, caught off guard before being able to quickly collect himself. "I don't know. It all seems weird, but it could be nothing."

"But think about how little we knew about all of this," Joyce said, starting back on her rant. "This all seems like a fun kind of story that our parents would tell us about their home town but they never said anything about it."

"Now our parents are part of some conspiracy?" Barb asked.

"I don't know... it's just... there's something else too."

"What?" Joyce just remained silent. Barb sighed. "I think we should just get back to work." She bent over to pick up her textbook but reeled back when it started to slowly float up. All the papers and pencils strewn across the floor from their marathon studying also started to rise. Barb's head snapped back over to Joyce. "What are you doing?"

"I told you there was something else."

The blackness of the night made Alice comfortable. She stood at the edge of the cliff at the quarry just outside of town. She breathed in the cold, dense air and looked down towards the huge drop down to

the water below. The sound of gravel crunching behind her became louder and she turned to see a pickup truck and a van pulling up. Alice walked away from the cliff edge and up to the driver's door of the pickup truck. A middle age man stepped out.

"Everything go according to plan?" Alice asked.

"Yes, mam," the man replied as other men and women of all ages got out of the cars. Everyone made their way to the back of the van. One woman opened the doors and pulled out a scrawny teenager with his hands tied together and a bag over his head.

"Where am I?" he called. "What are you going to do with me?" Alice walked up and pulled the bag off his head.

"We're not going to do anything to you," she said calmly with a smile on her face.

"You're... you're that new girl at school."

"How very perceptive."

"Why am I here?"

"We want to make you an offer. We want to give you power."

"And... and what if I say no?" The smile disappeared from Alice's face. She grabbed the boy by the collar and marched him over to the cliff's edge.

"It would be in your best interest to say yes." She yelled, pushing him so he was leaning over the cliff.

"OK! OK! I'll do it!" the boy yelled. Alice pulled him back and sat him down on the ground while he hyperventilated. The smile returned to her face.

"So glad we could come to an agreement."

A/N: Wow, it's been a while since I posted anything. So sorry about that. I'm excited to finish this story and I want to hear what you think

about it so far. As always, thanks for reading.

14. Chapter 14: The Fall of The Coalition

Eleven's nights were restless during normal Coalition work. But over the past few weeks, they had gotten unbearable. Of course she was scared of what was happening with The Legion and whatever was happening under the IPI Tower, but mostly she was missing her children all the way down in Indiana.

It was still dark outside when her alarm rang. She reached over to the other side of the bed to find that there was nobody there. A minute later, she was dressed and found Mike sitting in the kitchen. The news was on the TV in the background, but he wasn't paying any attention.

"Why are you up so early?" she asked.

"Couldn't sleep," was Mike's simple answer. Eleven began to make herself a pot of coffee when Mike admitted: "I'm scared."

"Things will get back to normal."

"Maybe, but when? I want to see our kids. And what if something found them down there?"

"Joyce and James are hidden. I made sure of it and I continue to check every day. My job is to make sure everything here is safe, you just need to make it seem to The Legion that everything is normal."

"But I want to do more."

"I can't think of anything for you to do. You know that they have eyes everywhere. If they see that you aren't teaching anymore, they'll know something is off. I have a team of qualified people working with me and I promise that we will make everything right." Mike went silent. Eleven went back to making her breakfast.

Only a couple minutes later, the woman on the TV news said something of interest.

"We have reports of a new breaking story coming in from all over the world." Eleven still wasn't paying much attention, instead focusing on

buttering a bagel. "At exactly 11:11 GMT this morning, many major cities across the world were hit by large explosions. While much remains unknown about the motive or who is responsible for these attacks, we have confirmed that all of the locations hit were offices of Multi-National Holdings Incorporated." It was at that moment that Eleven and Mike looked up at the TV in shock. It was The Coalition. "The company's only remaining office is their headquarters in Chicago. We will give you more details as they come." Eleven dropped her knife on the table.

"I have to go," she said, rushing out the door. Only moments later, Mike heard the siren of his wife's car speeding down the street.

"So... you're a super hero?" Barb asked, still not fully understanding what Joyce had just shown her.

"I don't know what I am. I haven't done anything with my... super powers yet."

"And you..." Barb looked to Edward. "You're awfully quiet. Did you know anything about this?" Edward opened his mouth to say something but couldn't get anything out.

"He knew," Joyce admitted. "I told him not to say anything." Barb sat down on her bed. Everything was overwhelming her.

"Where do we go from here? I mean... it's not like there's someone we could consult on this."

"I don't know," Edward said. "Joyce came to me scared. I think she just wanted someone else to know." He turned to Joyce. "You haven't been doing anything with them, have you?"

"Well..." Joyce's voice trailed off.

"What have you been doing?"

"Just seeing what I can do. I haven't been doing any big magic shows or anything."

"Joyce!" Edward sounded upset. "You don't know what this can be

doing to you."

"Nothing's happened!"

"Yet!"

"Is there something better we can be doing rather than just yelling at each other?" Barb asked. Joyce and Edward recollected themselves. "When did this first happen?"

"Remember before we moved... we were out eating downtown and some guy tried to mug me and I said he ran away?"

"Yeah."

"He didn't run away. I got scared and slammed him into a building." Barb's eyes went wide at the realization. As overwhelmed as she was, she couldn't help feeling a little impressed.

"How... how did this happen?" Barb asked while still trying to sort out her thoughts. "Is there anything that could have caused you to get... super powers?" Joyce shook her head. "Well I guess the only other question I have is... why did you tell me? Why now?" Joyce hung her head and began thinking.

"I've been getting bad feelings. Feelings like... something bad is going to happen. Soon. And you need to be prepared."

The Coalition's headquarters was filled with flashing red lights and alarms. Everything was in emergency mode as the remaining agents struggled to find out what had happened and how long it would be until they were targeted.

"Director! Good that you made it," Agent read said as he saw Eleven leave the elevator, quickly passing a phone off to the agent next to him. Eleven skipped the normal greetings and got straight to business.

"What do we have left? Agents? Resources?"

"We have very little. Pretty much only what the headquarters base

has direct control over. Other investigation organizations have seized what The Legion hasn't from the other bases." Eleven walked into her office. Read followed.

"What about agents?" she asked, sitting down at her overflowing desk.

"Any of the remaining agents could have been Legion members who placed those bombs. I don't think we can trust any of them. However, because our base was attacked by The Legion a little while ago, their members showed themselves and were weeded out when the Demogorgon showed up. I think we *can* trust our agents here."

Every agent outside Eleven's office suddenly went silent and stopped moving. Confused, Eleven stood up and went to see what was happening.

"What's going on?" she asked. One of the agents in the middle room held up the handset of a landline phone with a shaking hand.

"It's a phone call for you... from Ten." Eleven was shocked and hesitated for a moment before going to accept the call. She walked through the crowd of terrified Coalition agents with confidence, hoping it would rub off on them.

"What do you want?" she asked once she had the phone up to her ear.

"Hi, El. Nice to hear you too," said Ten's vile voice from the other end.

"What do you want?" Eleven repeated, a little slower this time.

"I just wanted to talk to you about the position you're in. You've probably figured out by now that all the attacks on The Coalition were our doing."

"Of course we did. Why are you calling?"

"I just wanted to draw to your attention the fact that your organization is crippled to the point of near destruction. Now... as much as you don't want to admit it, I know you better than almost anyone. And because of that, I know that you're going to want to

protect your darling children."

"My children are safe!" Eleven said with a touch of anger in her voice. "Even if you know where they are, we can protect them."

"Well... I'm sure you can, but you won't."

"What makes you say that?"

"By my count, you have twelve analysts and eight agents left in your entire international organization. If you send an agent to protect your children you're devoting a significant amount of your resources to something selfish and it would weaken your central command enough that we could just swoop in and take over. But then again, if you don't go and save the little kiddies, we're going to go after them. I just wanted to make the point that whatever you do, you're going to lose." Ten stopped talking just long enough to give Eleven time to think about the situation she was in. "Checkmate." was the last thing she said before hanging up.

Eleven held the phone for another couple seconds before putting it down. The Coalition was falling, but she wouldn't let this be over.

"I know things look bleak," she said confidently. "But this is not the end. We will endure!" The rest of the agents got back to work with a little bit more confidence than before and Eleven went back to her office where Read was waiting.

"I know you're just as scared as them," he said while Eleven collapsed down into her chair.

"I am. I just couldn't show it." Eleven picked up her phone and started dialing.

"Who are you calling?"

"I need to bring a legend of The Coalition out of retirement."

Dr. Carter's chemistry class didn't seem the same that day. He was distracted and it showed. By the time the bell rang, most of the class was eager to get out.

"Joyce, Edward and Barb! Could you three stay after class for a minute?" They didn't know what was going on, but nonetheless, they obliged.

After everyone else had cleared the room. Carter went over and locked the door. The uncertainty as to what was about to happen was eating away at Joyce. She got scared. She got ready to use her powers at any minute should Carter try something to hurt them. He didn't. Instead, he sat down on the other side of the big table at the front of the room.

"I spoke with your mother on the phone this morning, Joyce," he said. Joyce was surprised by this.

"You know my mother?" Carter laughed a little.

"I suppose you wouldn't know the extent of our relationship, but it's time you did." Joyce looked back and forth to Edward and Barb on either side of her. They both seemed to understand as little as she did.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Do you know what I did for a living before I became a teacher?"

"No idea."

"I was an agent for the most powerful secret intelligence organization in the world." Joyce laughed. "It wasn't a joke." Joyce stopped laughing.

"What? What is that supposed to mean?"

"It means that I was a field agent for The Coalition when I was sent to Hawkins on January 1st, 1984 to find out what was going on at the Hawkins National Laboratory."

"You three had better sit down. This is going to be a long story."

There were a couple classrooms around the gym of Hawkins High School that weren't used during lunch. Alice knew this. She quietly

slipped away from lunch and walked into one of them without anyone noticing. The others were already there. A couple of students, three teachers, and a some other people from around town.

"Thank you all for meeting me here," Alice said. The others simply nodded. "We need to accelerate out objective."

"But aren't you worried we might get noticed?" one of the others asked. Alice turned slowly to face him.

"He has assured me that it won't matter. We have enough already that if we accelerate, it will be time to make ourselves known before anybody is able to notice that anything is off."

"But we aren't pressed for time. I think it would be better to stay quiet." Alice simply stared for several long seconds.

"Are you questioning his judgment?" Alice's otherwise calm voice betrayed a hint of anger. The other man went silent and retreated backwards. Alice took a step forward towards him. "After everything he has given you, you dare to question him?"

"I'm sorry. Please forgive me." The man's voice was trembling.

"No." The man backed up again and Alice followed him until he was pressed up against the wall. She grabbed him by the throat and lifted him off the ground with one arm. "We have to be quiet so nobody knows we're here, so I can't quite make the example out of you that I want to. But that won't stop me from getting close." Alice removed her hand from his throat and the man fell back to the floor. She stepped back. His eyes were filled with mortal terror for just a moment, then he collapsed on the floor. His heart had stopped. Alice took in a deep breath. "I've been wanting to try that out for a while." She looked around to everyone else in the room. "Does anybody else have any doubts?" Silence. "Dispose of the body. You know what else to do." Alice turned and left the room.

A/N: I'm back to writing when I can, but applying to college is taking a lot out of me. Please leave a review and thanks for reading.

15. Chapter 15: The Vigilante

"So you want us to believe that there are other dimensions, and monsters, and that Joyce's mom is a secret agent," Edward asked when Carter was done with his story.

"Among other things, yes."

"Why should we believe it? All of this sounds ridiculous."

"Because it makes sense," Joyce said weakly. Carter looked over to her and raised an eyebrow.

"Why does it make sense?" he asked. Joyce stood up and for a moment, nothing happened. Then, the stapler on Carter's desk rose up and hovered about an inch off the desk. Then, all of the rest of his office supplies followed. Joyce turned to face the file cabinet at the side of the room. It rose up and stayed in the air for a moment, then faltered and slammed down to the ground. The rest of the things fell back down and were followed by Joyce. Barb ran over to her.

"Are you OK?" she asked.

"I'm fine," Joyce said woozily, picking herself up off the ground. "I just think I tried to do too much that time." Edward was paying attention to Carter.

"You don't seem very surprised," he remarked.

"No. I always had my suspicions that Joyce might share her mother's abilities but I never knew for sure," Carter responded.

"What are we supposed to do with this information?" Joyce asked.

"Don't tell anyone what I told you. I'm going to tell Alice later today since she has class with me at the end of the day. But other than her, don't talk to anyone about it."

"Why did you tell us then?"

"Because of what happened to The Coalition this morning, I need you

to be vigilant. I need you to know that there are people out there who are willing to hurt you and I need you to tell me if anything happens."

Eleven hadn't left the Coalition headquarters in over thirty six hours. She tried to get some sleep at night in her office, but with everything happening, she could never really rest. She rubbed the sleep out of her eyes and refocused her attention to the report she was reading on her laptop. A knock came at the door.

"Come in." Agent Read walked in. Agents had been coming in and out all day, so this was nothing out of the ordinary. The way Read seemed to be acting however, was out of the ordinary.

"Remember the vigilante that we were tracking for a while?" he asked.

"Yes, but I don't think now is the right time to go after him."

"He just showed up here and turned himself in." Eleven looked up from her screen.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, he just showed up, asked for some Coalition agents down at the front desk, and turned himself in as the vigilante. We put him in a holding cell in the basement."

"Did he say anything?"

"Nothing. Just that you're the only person he would talk to."

"He said that he would only talk to the leader of The Coalition?"

"No, he said 'I will only speak to Eleven. Or Elle Byers-Wheeler, whichever you want to call her'... His words. Not mine." Eleven's interest was piqued. She shut the lid of her laptop.

"I guess I should go talk to him." She stood quickly up. This was the first time in hours that Eleven was completely alert.

"Are you sure that's a smart choice?"

"Why wouldn't it be?"

"What if he's a Legion member?"

"Did you search him for weapons when you took him in?"

"Yes, of course."

"Then what's the danger even if he is?"

"Well... you know The Legion. They have things we can't even imagine." Read began struggling to support his argument. He chased after his boss as she left the office and went towards the elevator.

"Even if he has something new and dangerous, I'm pretty powerful too. It's not like I'm going in there completely unarmed." Read gave up trying to convince Eleven that this wasn't a good idea. When she committed herself to something, it was not easy to convince her otherwise.

The elevator doors closed in front of Eleven and Agent Read. Eleven pressed the secret button to allow them to get to the basement, and their long journey down started. As much as Read didn't want to admit it, he was scared. The uncertainty as to the future scared him. Eleven was scared too, but not as much as her right hand man. She spent most of the elevator ride thinking about what she was going to say when she met the mysterious vigilante. She had participated in a lot of interrogations since she was a young girl, so she had a basic script memorized but every interrogation required something different.

The elevator doors opened and Eleven and Read walked out into The Coalition's secure complex below the building. They went past the guard, through some halls and eventually up to a big metal security door. The door buzzed and Eleven walked through to find another door. She closed the first one and waited to be buzzed through the second one. In those couple of moments when she was alone, Eleven finished preparing what she was going to say.

The door buzzed. Eleven confidently pulled it open and walked out

into the small concrete room.

"I'm going to need you to tell me who-" Eleven started to say. She was three steps from the empty chair on one side of the table when she caught sight of the man sitting opposite it. She stopped in her tracks and immediately forgot everything she was going to say. All her preparation went out the window. He certainly looked different, but Eleven would have recognized his clean-shaven face anywhere. Now, she had imagined this conversation for a very long time. She had imagined every situation she might have it in and every scenario that might arise. Except this one.

"Fifteen years!" she practically yelled at the man sitting on the other side of the table. "Without any warning, you left without a trace. Mom and I were worried sick, Will."

"I know," Will Byers said from his seat at the cold metal table. "I have a lot of explaining to do."

"Yeah, you do. Because you vanished for *fifteen years* and then apparently just decided to appear out of nowhere right at the most stressful time ever. You know, my kids don't even know you. They had to grow up looking at old pictures of their Uncle Will as if he was dead."

"I know. And there's not a day that goes by that I don't feel sorry about that." Eleven plopped down in her chair, ready to begin grilling her brother. She calmed down a little bit to begin.

"So where were you?"

"Remember thirty years ago when you drove the Demogorgon out of me?"

"I almost died doing it. Of course I remember."

"You didn't drive him out completely."

"What did I do, then?"

"You took him down a peg. You switched who's in control. Now, instead of the Demogorgon being in charge of me, I'm in charge of it."

"So a couple of months ago when The Legion attacked us and the Demogorgon saved us..."

"That was me. You didn't know what was going on with me all that time, but I knew everything that was going on with you. I saw you rise through the ranks here. I saw your kids growing up."

"Why did you leave in the first place?"

"I used my connection with the Demogorgon and the Upside-Down for years to bring people to justice that wouldn't otherwise get what they deserved. That got me enemies. Since you were starting a family, I decided that it would be safer for you, Mike, and the kids if I wasn't around. The less my enemies know about me, the less they can hurt the people I love." Eleven was beginning to understand.

"Why now?"

"What?"

"Why did you come back now?"

"Over the past couple of years, I've been tracking a potential threat and I just learned how powerful they actually are. I just realized how much damage they could do."

"Yeah, we just saw what The Legion can do to us."

"What? No, not The Legion. They're nothing compared to what's coming." Eleven's heart dropped.

"What's coming?"

Something seemed different when Carter told his story to Alice. She payed attention like the others, but she didn't seem surprised by any of it. She didn't say anything when he was finished. They just stared at each other in silence for a few moments before Carter finally asked:

"Do you have any questions?" Alice leaned forward in her seat a little.

"The gate to the Upside-Down..."

"Yes, what about it?"

"Where was it exactly?" Carter wasn't expecting this kind of question. He furrowed his brow and thought for a moment.

"It was in the basement of the Hawkins National Lab. But I don't think it's a problem now."

"What makes you say that?"

"The lab shut down in 1987. They've been putting off its demolition for thirty years but the Department of Energy finally said that they're sending crews over to do it next week. It will be nice to finally be rid of it." Alice leaned back in her seat and started thinking. "I told Joyce, Edward, and Barb to just be aware that anything could happen. If you see anything strange or out of the ordinary, please tell me. And if you're ever in danger come to me as soon as you can. Or... go to Joyce." Alice raised one eyebrow.

"Why Joyce?"

"Joyce appears to have the same powers as her mother. She's just beginning to figure them out though." Alice nodded slowly.

"Can I go now?" she asked.

"If you don't have any questions, yes." Alice simply picked up her backpack and left the room. But she didn't leave the school. She found a dark room where she wouldn't be disturbed. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

"She's becoming more dangerous by the day," Alice said.

"I heard as well," said the voice in her head that had become normal over the past few months. "She won't be a problem. Dr. Carter also mentioned an opportunity for us to move up our plans."

"I'll gather the others. How soon now?" Alice asked excitedly.

"It won't be long now."

"Hey, guys!" Mary called to Edward, Barb and Joyce as they walked out of school. "What did Carter want after chemistry class? You guys didn't come to lunch afterwards so I guess it took a while."

"Nothing," all three of the others said at the same time. The traded some uncomfortable glances.

"He just wanted to talk to us about some grades," Joyce said. She felt bad lying to her new friend, but she remembered that Carter told her not to tell anyone what he told them.

"OK..." Mary knew something was up, but she decided not to pursue it further. "You guys want to do something tonight?"

"We can't," Edward said unconvincingly. "We all have homework to do... separately."

"Yeah... OK." Mary sounded defeated. "How about something this weekend?"

"That would probably work," Joyce said. Mary perked up a little.

"OK, see you guys then!" she said before prancing off. The rest of the group dispersed out towards their separate houses. But Joyce wasn't fifty feet off of school property when she got a text from Edward: "We need to talk about today."

A/N: Sorry for the irregular updates. I'm trying as hard as I can. My original file for this story got corrupted when I had this chapter almost done so I had to re-write the whole thing. I was hoping to get this story done before season 2 comes out, but it looks like that's not going to happen because I have a specific ending in mind and it's going to take a while to get there.

Please leave a review and thanks for reading.

16. Chapter 16: The Lab

Hawkins National Laboratory had been abandoned thirty years ago. Signs were put up alerting everyone that trespassing was illegal and dangerous soon after. Pretty much everyone paid attention to the signs. A couple groups of teenagers got into the building over the years while looking for mischief, but everybody else just ignored the big ominous building for the most part. The papers inside yellowed and the structure began to crumble for thirty years before the Department of Energy realized that it might be a safety concern they would be liable for. So they arranged for the building to be torn down. A week before it was scheduled for demolition though, Alice came.

Under the cover of night, her and two vans of people quietly cut the lock on the gate and parked in one of the open garage bays around the back. Once the motor stopped, Alice climbed out of the van and began surveying the area. The others who came with her got out and began taking boxes of equipment out of the back of the vans. Alice knelt down and put her hand on the ground. She closed her eyes. A moment later, her eyes snapped back open and she said:

"It's close." The group forced their way through a locked door into the facility and then navigated the halls over to a ripped and broken curtain indicating that the area behind it was a bio-hazard zone. Alice didn't care. She just pushed past and her team followed.

It was a surprise to everyone that the elevator down to the basement was still working. The basement itself was pitch black. Flashlights illuminated their way through the concrete corridors to a metal door falling off its hinges. The room behind the door was filled with rubble. The ceiling had collapsed but someone had cleared a path through the rocks and dirt to the part of the room Alice was interested in. She passed old, broken computer equipment and crushed furniture sticking out from under the rubble to find what she was looking for. The ceiling had fallen in but the walls were all still standing and at the end of the path was Alice's goal.

A long crack stretched through the middle of the wall all the way from the floor up to where the ceiling used to be. Alice walked up to

it and gingerly ran her finger along the middle of it.

"What is it?" asked one of the people following her.

"It is the instrument of our victory," Alice replied in an almost giddy fashion. "Someone tried to close it, but it wants to open back up."

Will and Eleven continued working upstairs in Eleven's office. She determined that he was not a threat and got him out of the jail in the basement.

"We got a look at the Upside-Down through that crack you showed us under the IPI tower. Something was different about it," Eleven said while Will looked through all the information he could get his hands on.

"When we were fighting One, he never said anything about the Upside-Down changing. So we can assume that nothing like this has happened in thousands of years. Maybe never," Will added without looking up from the dossier he was reading.

"What do you think is happening?"

"Something is waking up. I heard whispers about it whenever I was there. The sky turned red, the vines started moving-"

"We saw the vines moving. They came through the gate and killed a few of our agents. Did they ever attack you?"

"No. Since I'm always there with the Demogorgon, I guess they recognize me as a part of the Upside-Down."

"So they're just trying to defend the Upside-Down?"

"I don't think so. Have you been back to IPI since then?"

"No. All this stuff with The Legion started and we've been flooded with work."

"I was there yesterday. The entire basement is covered in vines and they're working their way up. I tried to stop them but I think I only

slowed them down."

"That's something we've never seen in Hawkins."

"Exactly. It got to be too much for just me. That's why I contacted you." Eleven's eyes went wide with a realization.

"The gate in Hawkins! Nobody's checked on it in thirty years. What if it opens? My kids are there."

"Calm down," Will said, rushing over to his sister. "I've been checking up on it. Plus, I made sure it was closed for good a number of years ago."

"But still, what if something happens to it?"

"There's no chance of that." A knock came at the door.

"Come in," Eleven called. Agent Read stuck his head inside.

"Could I talk to you about something, director?" he asked.

"I'll just be a minute," Eleven told Will. She left the room and Read closed the door behind her. "What is it?"

"I just wanted to voice my opinion again that I'm not completely comfortable with this."

"He's my brother. I trust him completely."

"What if he just looks like your brother? That's not out of the question for The Legion."

"I understand, but trust me. He's Will."

"I really want to be able to trust you, but one thing that The Coalition has always taught me is to be skeptical. About everything. I know this seems to be a saving grace, but doesn't it seem too convenient?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that a guy showed up, said he's your long-lost brother and not forty five minutes later, he's looking through highly classified

Coalition reports." Eleven took a deep breath and a sense of quiet authority fell on her face.

"I understand your concern, Agent. But right now, you just have to trust me."

"Yes, director," Read said quietly.

Edward's house was selected as the site of the conversation nobody in the group wanted to have. It was night before they were all actually willing to meet, though. All three of them sat in silence for the first ten minutes or so, just thinking about what was to happen. They had invited Alice, but she said she was busy. Joyce finally broke the silence:

"What are we supposed to do?" she asked.

"I guess what Carter said," Edward replied. "Be vigilant and tell him if anything happens."

"But that can't be it. We need to do something else."

"Why?" Barb asked from her seat in the corner. "What more can we do?"

"I guess I have super powers. That's something."

"Super powers you don't know how to use. It could be dangerous if you over-stretch yourself."

"Didn't you hear Carter's story? My mom was way younger than me when she was saving the world."

"But she knew about her powers and was training with them earlier on. You nearly fainted lifting a file cabinet earlier today!"

"I'm tempted to agree with Barb," Edward said. "What are we supposed to go off of?"

"What?" Joyce asked.

"We don't have any leads. We have no idea where to start. And honestly, I think we should start by keeping ourselves safe. I know you want to do something, but I don't think that's smart."

"I thought you were with me on this!"

"I was, but I thought about what could happen if you go after The Legion completely unprepared. We all heard the same story from Carter, and what I heard was a lot of times your mom got lucky. I don't think you should trust-"

"Shut up," Joyce interrupted Edward, then started paying attention to something else.

"No," Edward insisted. "You need to hear this. I don't want to-"

"Shut up," Joyce repeated. "This isn't about that," she whispered. The room fell silent for a few seconds before Joyce said: "Someone's spying on us." She turned to the open window and focused on it. A second later, Mary appeared and flew in through the window. She landed in the middle of the floor. Joyce quickly grabbed a tissue from Edward's desk to wipe her bloody nose while Mary scrambled to her feet.

"How did you pull me in here?" she asked. The other three just awkwardly looked at each other. None of them was willing to answer the question. "You know what, it doesn't matter," Mary continued. "What matters is that you all told me you were busy but then you decided to hang out without me."

"Mary-" Edward started to say before he was interrupted.

"No, just listen to me for a moment. I understand you three were already friends beforehand and that you might want some time just the three of you. I'm fine with that. The only thing I ask is that you're honest with me and it looks like you're not."

"Mary, that is so not what this is about," Joyce rebutted.

"What is it about, then?" Mary put her hands on her hips. "I'm waiting." Joyce opened and closed her mouth a couple of times, trying to decide if she should tell Mary the truth or another lie.

"Never mind," Mary said impatiently. "If you don't want to talk to me, I'll just go."

"Mary, wait!" Joyce called. Mary turned around but didn't get the chance to say anything. There was a loud crack as the entire wall to the outside caved in and Edward's room was left broken and open to the elements. A piece of wood flying through the air hit Joyce in the head. She was a little woozy, but as the dust settled, she could see a figure approaching through the newly opened hole in the house.

A/N: New chapters coming as soon as I write them. Please leave a review and thanks for reading.

17. Chapter 17: Trust No One

Peter Carter had left The Coalition and settled down in Hawkins thirty years ago. He never considered his life monotonous, but it certainly was less exciting than it had been when he was a secret agent. He loved his life as an agent, but then he met Elizabeth Maple (now Elizabeth Carter). He fell in love with her after their first conversation and their relationship had its rough parts, mostly when she found out about his secret life, but for the most part, it was a happy one. That particular cold January night, they were cooking dinner together. It was something they loved to do since the early days of their relationship, but it had never lost its charm. The dish was simple. Two servings of fresh made ravioli with a side salad. But the way the two of them moved around the kitchen, not only avoiding running into each other but also meeting up to work together, was almost an art form. Despite both of them being in their sixties, they finished in record time and sat down at their small kitchen table together.

"How was school today?" Elizabeth asked. It was a routine question, but Carter was struggling to figure out how to answer it on that particular day.

"Concerning," was all he was able to come up with.

"Who so?" Elizabeth asked.

"I got a call from El today." Eleven had been a student of both Carters and they were both in the very small number of people who knew her secret. "Did you see all the terrorist attacks on the news this morning?"

"The office buildings blown up all over the world? Of course I saw it. We talked about it in class today. We had a discussion on the rise of modern terrorism. But why was El calling about it? Do they have something to do with The Coalition?"

"All of the offices were Coalition bases. They were blown up by the newly reborn Legion." Elizabeth dropped her fork and her mouth hung open. The Legion had gotten close to killing both of them.

Elizabeth's main comfort for the last thirty years was the fact that The Legion was obliterated after One failed to destroy the world.

"How bad is this?" Carter knew exactly how bad it was. It could mean the end of The Coalition. It could mean defeat for the last line of defense stopping The Legion from taking over the world. But he didn't want to tell his wife that. He wanted her to feel safe. Luckily for him, Carter didn't have to say anything. The phone rang and he excused himself to go get it.

He picked up the antique landline and raised it quickly to his ear.

"Hello?" he said to whoever was on the other end of the line. Elizabeth listening from her spot at the dinner table only heard half of the conversation. "What?" was the next thing Carter said. Elizabeth could tell he was scared. "Where?" he asked after that, then he just said "I'm on my way." before slamming the handset back down onto the base. Carter ran back into the kitchen. "I have to go," he told Elizabeth.

"Where to?"

"Williams street. No time to explain." Carter pulled a dusty black duffel bag out of the closet. "Lock yourself in the secret part of the basement," he said plainly before running out the door. Elizabeth just stood up and ran downstairs, leaving her hot ravioli sitting on the table.

Alarms were going off at The Coalition. An agent ran into Eleven's office and said:

"There are vines coming up from the basement of the IPI tower. They're attacking anyone going through the lobby." Eleven and Will traded glances.

"We need to get that building evacuated," Will said. "And all the buildings around it."

"Why?" Eleven asked.

"Everyone's going to be trapped in there if they can't go out through

the lobby. Plus, I've been tracking the growth of those vines. As far as I could tell, they weren't going to make it to the surface for at least a few days. Something's speeding them up and we have no idea what they could do to the structure of the building." Eleven got up and flung open her door.

"Read!" she called. Agent Read hurried over. "Get the police to start evacuating all the buildings within one block of the IPI tower and have some agents figure out how to get people out of IPI itself without getting them attacked by those vines." Read nodded and started yelling orders at the surrounding agents.

"What if we fought back against the vines?" Will asked.

"We tried that a little when they first attacked us. It did nothing."

"But what if this time, we go in with enough to suppress the vines. I'm not saying we try and destroy them outright, I just want to get them out of the lobby long enough for people to get out of the building." Eleven thought about her brother's suggestion.

"That could work," she said. "I'll get some agents on it."

With everyone around the office preoccupied, nobody noticed Agent Read looking back at Will with a dark look of suspicion.

Joyce was beginning to come to her senses. She looked around what was left of the room. Edward and Barb were on their feet and had retreated to opposite corners of the room. Mary's head was barely visible above the rubble. Then, Joyce heard the crunch of someone walking over the rubble towards her. She snapped her head around to see who it was. The long blonde hair was the first thing she saw. Then she recognized Alice's smiling face. Joyce pushed a couple pieces of wood off of her and stood up.

"Alice! What happened?" she asked.

"Get away from her!" Barb yelled. "She's the one who blew up the wall."

"What? How could she have done that?" Joyce looked back to Alice

who kept smiling and kept slowly advancing. A pang of doubt and fear struck Joyce's heart. "Alice, what are you doing?"

"It's finally come to this," Alice began. "I've been waiting for this for a long time."

"What are you doing?" Joyce repeated. Alice raised her hand towards Joyce and Joyce flew back and was pinned up against the wall.

"Carter told you about the Upside-Down, right?" Joyce struggled to nod, but eventually was able to. "I've been serving it for the past months along with a number of others who have turned to our side. I know about your power and your mother's power as well. You and your stolen power are the only thing that might pose a threat to us, so it's time to extinguish that threat." Joyce's heart fell when she understood what Alice was trying to do.

"What about my mom?" she asked in an attempt to stall. "And Nine and Ten? And Carter's son? They all have my powers too. Why are you coming for me?"

"Don't worry. We haven't forgotten about them. You are just the first." Alice pulled a big ceremonial knife out from behind her with the hand she wasn't using to telepathically hold Joyce against the wall. "But enough chatter. It's time for you to die!" She raised the knife and Barb yelled out. Edward just stood still with his eyes wide open and couldn't say anything.

From outside, a loud sound of tires squealing came through the hole in the house. A car peeled down the street and screeched to a stop outside the house. The door flew open and Carter ran out towards the group.

"What happened here?" he yelled. Alice turned her head to look at Carter and while she wasn't paying attention, Joyce focused on all the rubble around her. With her mind, she threw as much of it as she could at Alice. A piece hit her in the head and broke her concentration. Joyce fell to the floor.

"Run!" Joyce yelled. Barb ran and Edward followed close behind. Joyce stayed behind and began digging Mary out of the rubble.

"What?" was all Mary could say as she slowly regained consciousness. When enough pieces of house were off of her, Joyce pulled Mary up by she shoulders. Edward, seeing what she was doing ran back and picked Mary up into his arms.

"We need to go," he said. "Now!"

"What happened?" Carter asked again as the three kids ran towards him.

"Alice is evil and trying to kill me!" Joyce yelled back. Carter didn't need to be told twice. He joined the kids in running to the car. Back in the remains of Edward's room, Alice slowly got back up and saw what was happening.

"No!" she yelled viciously. Just as the others were about to reach the car, it flew away from them and tumbled down the road until it finally fell into a ditch on the other side of the street, wheels up.

"I guess we're running," Carter said. He didn't get any argument from the others. They kept running down the road as fast as they could. Alice began running too. Realizing the threat, Carter pulled a gun out of his belt, spun around, and delivered a well placed shot to Alice's shoulder.

"What was that for?" Edward yelled.

"She would have done much worse to all of us," Carter said, not breaking his run. He was surprisingly in shape for his age. The group continued to run as fast as their legs would carry them, without regard for how tired they were getting.

It was twenty minutes later when the group arrived at Carter's house, out of breath.

"OK, so what just happened?" asked a very confused Mary.

"Let's get down to the basement then we can talk," Carter said. He led the group down the stairs and to a big security door. After putting in a code, the door opened. Elizabeth was sitting on one of the chairs inside the panic room.

"You're back," she said. "What took so long?"

"It's a long story." Carter threw his arms around his wife while Joyce pulled the door closed behind everyone.

"You shot my sister!" yelled Edward.

"I didn't kill her," Carter insisted. "I just slowed her down so she wouldn't succeed in killing us."

"Wait, what?" Mary exclaimed. "I was out for a while. What happened?"

"She's a part of this," Joyce said to Carter. "I think you need to tell her everything."

For the next half hour, Mary was the quietest everyone had ever seen her while she absorbed every detail of Carter's story. Joyce and the others piped in when they arrived at the story of that night's events.

"What?" she asked afterwards. "That can't be true."

"It is," Carter replied. "But I'm afraid I don't have time to field questions at the moment."

"What are we supposed to do?" Joyce asked. "Our parents sent us here to stay safe, but apparently the danger came with us."

"I honestly don't know what we're supposed to do," Carter said in a rare moment of helplessness. "Did Alice say anything about what she was doing?"

"She said... that she was serving the Upside-Down," Joyce said, pausing to think more about what Alice said. "Oh, there are other people working with her."

"Who?"

"I don't know. She just said her and some other people."

"This is bad."

"Why?" Edward asked.

"Anyone could be on her side. We have no idea who isn't a servant of the Upside-Down."

"Who can we trust, then?"

"Each other."

"And other than that?" Barb asked. Carter thought for a moment.

"Trust no one."

A van pulled up to what was left of Edward's house and a man got up out of the passenger side. He ran over to Alice lying on the ground. As his footfalls drew closer, Alice started to slowly get up.

"Did you accomplish your mission?" the man asked. Alice stood up all the way.

"There were... complications," she said angrily. Then, the man took notice of the large bloody spot on Alice's shoulder. She raised her hand to the hole in her shirt and held it there for a moment. Then, a crushed bullet flew out of her body and hovered before her hand. Alice closed her thumb and index finger around it and observed it.

"What should we do?" the man asked.

"It's time," Alice said, looking up from the bullet. "Tell everyone in town it's time to make ourselves known. Find Peter Carter and those kids. Kill the others, but Joyce Wheeler is mine."

A/N: Again, thanks for reading and please leave a review.

Enjoy season 2!

18. Chapter 18: The Escape

"How did the operation go?" Eleven asked Agent Read when he got back to the base.

"We got everyone out of the building," Read reluctantly replied.

"So Will's idea worked?"

"Yes, and..." Read didn't finish his sentence. Eleven looked up at him.

"What were you about to say?"

"It doesn't matter," he turned to walk away.

"What is it?" Eleven insisted. Read stopped and turned back.

"I had my doubts about Will. I'm sorry."

"Your doubts were entirely reasonable. That's why I trust you so much. Because you're willing to tell me when we disagree and you call me out when I'm being unreasonable." Read simply nodded.

"Where is Will now?"

"He said he was going to go check on my kids in Hawkins."

"He's driving to Indiana?"

"No. Apparently he can do something with the Upside-Down so he can get there quickly and look in on them."

"Oh." Read was still in disbelief about Will Byers' powers despite working alongside Eleven for so many years.

The door to the office burst open and Will ran in, out of breath.

"We have a problem," he announced.

"We can't just sit here!" Joyce exclaimed after having been in Carter's basement for almost three hours.

"I actually agree with you," Carter said. "And I think I know what to do."

"Well then, what's the plan?" Edward asked, standing up from the corner where he was sitting.

"We're going to Chicago. We're going to be safest with The Coalition."

"But didn't they just get destroyed?"

"HQ is still standing. It may only be a fraction of what we used to be, but it's still going to be the safest place in the world. Plus, Joyce's mom is there. I'll call ahead to let her know we're coming."

"What about James and Hunter?" Joyce asked. "We can't just leave them here."

"Alice doesn't seem interested in them," Elizabeth pointed out. "But they might still be in danger. If the rest of you go to Chicago, I'll get the two of them to safety."

"But Alice smashed your car," Joyce said.

"Elizabeth has her car and I bought a van a couple of years ago when I started coaching the high school baseball team," Carter replied. He walked over to the wall, opened up a metal panel and started typing something into a keypad. A second later, the wall opened up to reveal a small armory.

"If we weren't fearing for our lives right now, that would be the coolest thing ever," Edward remarked. Carter ignored all the guns and gadgets and picked up a black ring, about the size of a dinner plate.

"What's that?" Joyce asked.

"It was invented in the early 80's," Carter explained. "It was designed to block Ten's powers when we were fighting her. Then The Legion stole its designs and it was used on your mother a couple of times, then in the end it was used to keep Nine and Ten under control when we were holding them prisoner for the past thirty years."

"Who are you planning to use that on?"

"While we're here, we might as well find out a little bit more about what Alice wants."

"You don't mean..."

"Yes, I do."

Eleven was relieved when she got Carter's message. But that relief was short lived.

"Director!" Read called. "You need to get over here!" Eleven got up and ran over to where Read and most of the other agents were gathered around a window looking out onto the skyline.

"What is it?" Eleven asked. Read simply pointed.

"Look at the IPI tower," he said. Eleven squinted to see out in the darkness. Once her eyes refocused, she could see that the vines had made it about two thirds of the way up the outside of the tower. "And there are cracks in the top windows," Read pointed out.

Then the ground shook. Eleven stumbled away from the window as she struggled to regain her balance. The ground shook again and the IPI tower went toppling over. A huge dust cloud went up and covered a few city blocks. Then it was as if every police siren in the city went on at once.

Eleven was stunned.

"What do we do, Director?" Read asked. Eleven couldn't think. She was too overwhelmed.

"They're going to keep spreading," Will said from behind the group. "More buildings are going to fall. You need to start clearing more people out of there." Everybody just stared at him.

"You heard him!" Eleven said. "Start getting people to safety!"

A plan was made and perfected as much as it could be in the limited time they had. It still wasn't a good plan, but it would have to do.

Carter managed not to mention it when he called Eleven to let her know that they were coming to Chicago. Joyce walked alone down the street, her heart beating faster than it ever had. Her eyes darted side to side, keeping an eye out for Alice's blonde hair sticking out in the darkness.

"I don't know about this," Joyce whispered into a small microphone Carter had given her.

"Trust me," Carter's voice whispered in her earpiece. "And say as little as you can. We don't want her to know I'm listening."

"You're stupider than I thought!" called out a voice from the dense trees behind Joyce. Alice emerged and began to slowly walk towards her prey.

"I just want to know what you're doing!" Joyce yelled back to the girl she had always thought of as a kind of sister. "Why do you want to kill me?" She was stalling, trying to draw Alice's attention towards her.

"I told you. You pose a threat."

"How? I don't even know what I can do."

"We still can't take that risk." Joyce immediately was forced down to her knees and held down as Alice got closer.

"How many more of you are there?" Joyce gritted her teeth through the pain.

"More than you can imagine." Alice was smiling by this point. She was so focused on Joyce that she didn't actually notice what Joyce was doing. Out from behind her, the black collar silently flew up. Joyce focused on it and caught it. She brought it towards her and was able to slip it around Alice's neck before she was the wiser.

As soon as it went on, Joyce was released.

"It's on!" Joyce yelled into her microphone. "Get over here!"

"What did you do to me?" Alice screamed. Joyce didn't answer.

Carter's silver van pulled up to the girls. The back door flung open and Edward jumped out. He and Joyce shoved Alice in and drove out of there in a couple of seconds.

Alice didn't like getting shoved in a van. She flailed around but with the collar on, she wasn't really that powerful and Mary was able to get some handcuffs on her. Alice struggled for a couple more seconds, but then gave up.

"Now we get to ask our questions," Joyce said. She grabbed onto one of the seats as Carter flung around a corner.

"Let me out!" Alice said between her teeth.

"No, you're going to tell us what's going on."

"Let me out!" Alice said louder.

"Who are you working for?" Edward asked.

"Let me out!" Alice screamed.

"Why do you want to kill Joyce? What are you planning?"

"Let her out!" yelled a very deep voice that wasn't Alice's. Everyone else moved back a little. The only sound echoing through the van was the whine of the engine as Carter sped down Hawkins' empty roads.

"You're not Alice," Joyce eventually said.

"No," said the thing that had taken over Alice's body.

"Who are you then?"

"I am the god of the dimension you call the Upside-Down."

"Well... why did you take over Alice?"

"I didn't take her over. I simply showed her what she could become with my help."

"And you gave her my powers?"

"I gave her something better. Your powers were stolen from me. They're a pathetic shadow of what they could be. Alice alone has enough power to tear down your world."

"Well then what do you get from all of this?"

"I've been imprisoned in this tiny world since the beginning of time. I've always known about your world, though. My favorite servant, the Demogorgon passed freely in between, but I am too large to fit through the temporary rifts he created. Until thirty five years ago when your mother opened that gate. I now have the means to take over your world, then expand."

"But we know what you're going to do. We can stop you." The voice laughed.

"You have a few hours to come up with a plan. Good luck. I've had billions of years." Everyone looked around at each other in fear. "This collar you invented is brilliant," remarked the voice. "It does a good job at weakening Alice's powers. But one thing: it wasn't designed to hold me."

"What does that mean?" asked Barb's trembling voice. She didn't have to wait long for an answer.

Bright lights shone through the back windows of the van as another vehicle caught up to them.

"Carter! Step on it!" Joyce yelled. Carter obliged. Nevertheless, he couldn't shake the other car on that long, straight Indiana road.

The kids in the back yelped as a grappling hook punched through one of the back doors. A second later, the door was ripped off and sliding down the road.

"Now, I must say goodbye for now!" said the voice. Alice's body stood up and broke apart the handcuffs without breaking a sweat. Then, she jumped out of the van and onto the other car before anybody could do anything.

The other car receded into the distance and the kids buckled themselves into the seats of the van as Carter made a break for the

highway.

A/N: I watched all of season 2 in one day! Thanks for continuing to read and review!